

Public Involvement Overview

November 2009

	Month
Hotline Calls*	19
Comment Sense Submissions/Inquiries**	48
FOIA requests	0
Speakers Bureau	
Presentation/Events	15
Neighborhood Boards	11
TAC	0
Community meetings	0

*Calls directly to the hotline 808.566.2299

** Includes all comments/inquiries via Project website from the end of the official DEIS comment period on February 6, 2009 to the end of the month.

November 2009 website and hotline comments

Submission Date	Submission Content/Notes
11/03/2009	Hi, please provide me with the exact street locations of all of the rail stops. I'm especially curious to know what the street locations are at the Iwilei and Chinatown stops. Thanks
11/09/2009	I am a research assistant doing research on the HHCTC. Where can I find the most current version of your capital/operating budget for the project? Thank you very much in advance.
11/10/2009	My firm is a construction consulting company with 20+ years experience in transportation projects, specifically rail and light rail. Is there a procurement coordinator or project director that I may contact regarding any opportunities with Honolulu Rail Transit.
11/12/2009	On behalf of the Hawaiian Collection at the University of Hawaii, we would like to request (2 copies each) of the original hand-outs for workshops beginning with the first workshop, and continuing on with future workshops. These items will be available to patrons as well as preserved for future research about Hawaii. Thank you, we look forward to a positive response to our request.
11/16/2009	Aloha, My name is Tri Bourne and I am a student-athlete at the university of southern california. I have been assigned a policy paper that i chose to do on the hawaii rail transit because I am from honolulu and I have had to make the commute from Kapolei for years . I was wondering if you could take a couple minutes out of your day to answer a couple of my questions. What ever you have time for will be fine. MUCH MAHALOS What is the specific problem? What make the gov't think that this will improve the situation? What exactly are the problems that will be satisfied? Besides traffic? What does the rail going to ala moana have to do with the helpfulness of the rail? What are all of the governments interests? What are the truths behind what the state is going to get out of the federal money? Where is it going? Where is it coming from? What are the loops? Why do some people feel that Mufi has been often lying? What is governor Lingle's stance? Who is the main opposition, against the rail? Who are the main people for it? Is this helping the environment or hurting it? Why Does the rail have anything to do with tourism, being that it is our #1 source of income? Who should I call to interview? What is the newspapers stance? What is the papers stance compared to eachother? What is your stance? Do you recommend anything for a better solution? Mahalo, Tri Bourne USC Mens Volleyball tbourne@usc.edu Cell: (808) 294-3739
11/18/2009	I understand that this Rail will help with the traffic problem, but my main concern is what happens when the train shuts down in the middle of the railway? Do the passengers have to wait hours and hours for it to start running again? Or do they have to walk back? Please respond soon. I appreciate the time it took for you to read my concern. Mahalo Sincerely, Rebecca Carino
11/18/2009	First I want to say that I think it's great that you have the overview in different

Submission Date	Submission Content/Notes
	languages. However, as a native Spanish speaker, I was let down by the translation of the overview on your website. In general, the information is presented well, but there are fundamentals of Spanish grammar that are not being double checked. Going forward, please invest more in getting native speakers to translate the text so it is clearer and gives the same courtesy to your Spanish-speaking clients as you do to your English-speaking clients. The same text in English would not be acceptable. Thanks for listening. And I look forward to seeing the line constructed!
11/18/2009	1. interesting videos, FAQ section is light. 2. I was told by a Denver resident that the Denver steelwheel-on-rail system is plagued by squealing wheels. How will you preclude that noise problem from occurring here?
11/19/2009	aloha, 'Flew' my six high school classes along your "Airport Alignment" video. They were very excited about the prospects of rail transit. In your Leeward CC Station plans will there be sidewalk access from Waipahu High campus (Yonamine Stadium) to the LCC station?
11/23/2009	Our publication Hawaii Style Magazine want to featuring news about Rail Transit construction will start next year. Do you have future train picture with station? Also Transit Map needed. Please email me. Thanks
11/24/2009	Do you have the comments you received concerning the DEIS on your website?
11/24/2009	Need contacts for new Transit Rail Project in Honolulu.
11/26/2009	I actually favor transit rail and I would like to do a speech for my Toastmaster's Club regarding this project. So, can you please answer the following questions? Thank-you, • I have read that each train can carry 300 people and 6,000 people per hour. I'm assuming the 6,000 people per hour is for both townbound and ewa bound trains so that for townbound, there would be 3,000 people per hour. Is this correct? • Does this mean that the town bound rail transit cars will be arriving at each Station at about every 10 minutes? • I've read that it will take 40 minutes to get from Kapolei to Ala Moana Shopping Center. To verify this, can you tell me how fast each train will be travelling, how many stations from Kapolei to Ala Moana Shopping Center and how long each train will stop at each Station? • I have read that there will be 5 park and ride facilities from Kapolei to Ala Moana. I could only find 4 locations and capacities: East Kapolei (900 spaces), UH West Oahu (1,000 spaces), Pearl Highlands (1,600 spaces) and Aloha Stadium (600 spaces). Is this correct? Where is the 5th park and ride facility? • For those not living next to a park and ride facility, how will rail passengers be expected to get to their closest rail transit station (that doesn't have park and ride facilities)? • How many kiss and ride facilities? • I've read that Federal funding will be something like 19% of the total transit rail cost. Is this correct? Why is this percentage so low? I thought when Rene Mansho vetoed the proposed rail transit in 1992, weren't the Feds supposed to pick up something like 80% of the rail cost? • What is the projected passenger ticket cost to take the rail transit from Kapolei to downtown? • What will the traffic congestion during construction be like? • Will there be parking facilities at the

Submission Date	Submission Content/Notes
	Ala Moana Shopping Center Rail Transit Station? • If the GE tax revenues are down, is there a chance that property taxes will go up?



November 1, 2009

Transit briefing shows project's promise

In what was billed as a "State of the Rail" address, Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann recapped the 40-year history of trying to bring rail to fruition for Honolulu commuters. And that history hasn't always been pretty — from false starts to political missteps to watching federal funds that would have then covered a third of the project's cost vanish, after the City Council botched a transit vote in 1992.

But beyond the history lesson — and let's hope we've learned from that lesson — the mayor also underscored how far the project has come in just four short years. And he explained in no uncertain terms how high stakes are, using the words of Hawaii's senior U.S. Sen. Daniel K. Inouye: It's now or never for rail.

It's true that after decades of studies and years of community meetings, the project is closer than ever to becoming a reality. With the City Council's approval last week of the programmatic agreement, part of the EIS that deals with how the city plans to handle historical sites and iwi as the project moves ahead, the ball will soon be in the governor's court.

The good news is that by the time the final EIS finds its way to Gov. Linda Lingle's desk, a multitude of state and federal agencies — including the military, the National Park Service and state and federal historic preservation offices — would have already signed off on various components of the document. So there should be no surprises. The governor should be able to promptly accept the document, keeping the project's momentum.

Of course, the EIS warrants a careful review, particularly in our island community steeped in cultural significance. So it's good to see the city push back its groundbreaking deadline by a month to allow more time for thorough review.

The mayor's plan to create an advisory council to provide input on Native Hawaiian and cultural issues, to provide guidance early on, also makes sense.

But while the pushed-back timeline provides the state with some breathing room, the economy surely won't. Now more than ever, Hawaii needs the economic boost the rail project can provide. The project is expected to generate more than 10,000 jobs, more than 4,000 of which will come from the struggling construction industry. Transit-oriented development around the rail stations is also sure to inspire public-private partnerships that could generate additional benefits, including affordable housing, community centers and more.

So far, the business community has responded with its show of support.

"When well-designed and operated, rail transit can be a tremendous benefit to the community, both from an economic and quality of life perspective. I've lived in cities with rail and used rail transit myself. I found it to be a great advantage to the city," said Al Landon, chairman and CEO, Bank of Hawaii, who attended the transit briefing.

Another wise investment is the city's planned partnership with the University of Hawaii's community colleges to create a curriculum to better prepare our work force for some 400 technical jobs associated with the project, including maintenance, operations and high-technology control systems.

To insist on local jobs is important. To provide people with the training needed to acquire those jobs is ideal.

Finally, the city rightly intends to push for the creation of a Transit Authority to oversee the project and its operation.

But there's no reason to wait for a charter amendment to get that done. The City Council should work with the administration to hammer out the important details, including how the panel would be appointed. Ensuring authority members are picked based on expertise rather than political patronage is crucial, particularly on a project of this size and scope. We need the best minds on board to ensure taxpayers get the most for their money.

With so much of the groundwork laid, and momentum building, it's important that all stakeholders work together to make the project the best it can be. And when problems arise, the focus must be on finding sensible solutions. This project is too important to let politics and discord get in the way.

November 1, 2009

Letters to the Editor

Rail transit

Contract issued in line with FTA rules

In the recent article on Mayor Hannemann's announcement regarding the construction start date for the rail project, Sean Hao reported that the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation warned that the city should not sign any contracts until the programmatic agreement is signed.

Hao misinterpreted the ACHP letter. The letter does not say the city should not sign any contracts. The letter is merely citing a part of the standard federal regulations applicable to any project. Hao should have researched this complicated process before he created a negative scenario.

Federal regulations do not prohibit the authorization of project planning activities, provided that such actions do not restrict the subsequent consideration of alternatives to avoid, minimize or mitigate the project's effects on historic properties.

The city selected a contractor for the first phase of construction, recognizing that no commitments related to the implementation of the project should be made until the conclusion of the environmental review process. We checked with the Federal Transit Administration, and its legal counsel assured us that the terms of the contract limit the activities of the contractor to those that would support the environmental review process, and to those that would not have an adverse impact or limit the choice of reasonable alternatives.

toru hamayasu | Department of Transportation Services

Letters to the editor

For Sunday, November 1, 2009

Elevated rail will hurt businesses

Honolulu's small businesses — shops, offices, restaurants — don't know what they'll be missing if trains pass over them high in the sky. If they did, they'd join the fight for grade-level transit.

What will they be missing? Everything.

In Portland, for example, tram riders pass shops and stores lined up one after another along the route. Since there is no charge for riding in the center of town, if a passenger sees an intriguing new shop, it's easy to hop off to check it out. Or if they pass a coffee shop and get that urge for a cup of java, easily done. Jump off at the next corner and take a few minutes to relax. Then hop back on and resume the journey.

A new store? People will see it instantly from the tram window and come visit as soon as it opens. A new restaurant? Along a tram route, diners can indulge in some wine or beer and not have to drive home.

What will we find underneath the elevated tracks planned for Honolulu? New shops and restaurants? No, just shadow, noise, litter, maybe empty storefronts.

Larry Geller
Honolulu



November 2, 2009

Honolulu rail project raises company's profile

*By Sean Hao
Advertiser Staff Writer*

Kiewit Pacific Co. finally got its piece of a Honolulu rapid transit project — it just took nearly two decades.

Last month, the city awarded Kiewit a \$482.9 million contract to build the first third of the planned 20-mile elevated rail line. It was the first construction contract awarded in the \$5.5 billion project.

Kiewit was also part of the Honolulu Monorail Team that placed third in a competition to build a rail system in the early 1990s. That line was never built.

"This is our second go," said Lance Wilhelm, Hawaii area manager for Kiewit. "We're just really super excited to be part of the program."

The two losing finalists for the contract were a joint venture between Nordic PLC and Hawaii Dredging and a consortium composed of SNC-Lavalin, Flatiron and Ledcor.

Although Kiewit may not be a household name, the company has been involved in several high-profile Hawaii projects dating back at least 25 years. These projects include telescopes on Mauna Kea, H-3 Freeway, the widening of Kalanianaʻole Highway and the interisland terminal at Honolulu International Airport. The company also built the water desalination plant in Kapolei.

Ron Taketa, financial secretary of the 7,200-member Hawaii Carpenters Union, said Kiewit has been a progressive contractor that works well with unions.

"There's no reason to believe that anything but positives will come out of the award that they have received," Taketa said.

some controversy

Kiewit's Hawaii work hasn't been without controversy and setbacks. In 1995 Steven Ouderkirk, a Kiewit carpenter, died after a concrete wall collapsed while he was working on H-3 Freeway below the tunnels. In 1994, construction trailers at a Kiewit base yard on Molokai were set on fire to protest a pipeline being built by the company. Some residents were concerned about losing water to resort development.

And in 1990, Kiewit buried an area that some Hawaiian groups said was a heiau, or ancient Hawaiian temple, while working on a portion of H-3 near Hospital Rock. Some studies suggested the site contained only agricultural terraces.

Nationally, Kiewit has worked on several major transit systems including the Vancouver, British Columbia Skytrain; the T-REX in Denver; and the Phoenix Metro.

Wilhelm, Kiewit's Hawaii head who was born and raised in Honolulu, said the firm's mix of local and national experience helped tip the scales in the company's favor on the new rail contract.

"We've been in Hawaii for 25-plus years doing a wide variety of work including quite a bit of work in that part of the world — the West Oahu area," he said. "When you have both the local knowledge and yet the technical expertise in having done similar work — that's probably what, in my mind anyway, gave us some advantage."

Kiewit Pacific is a wholly owned subsidiary of the privately owned Omaha, Neb.-based Kiewit Corp. The parent company was formed in 1884 by brothers Peter and Andrew Kiewit. Today, the employee-owned company is ranked fifth in a list of the top 400 U.S. contractors, according to Engineering News-Record, a weekly trade magazine. Overall, Kiewit had \$8 billion in revenue last year.

Locally, Kiewit had sales of about \$125 million and about 440 employees last year, Wilhelm said.

Kiewit's contract is for construction of the first phase of the rail project, which will run from Kapolei to Pearl Highlands near Leeward Community College. Later phases will connect that line to Ala Moana Center.

\$260M in contracts

Kiewit has received at least \$260 million in state and city work in recent years, according to a search of state and city contracts. Those jobs include work on the North-South Road and the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands office, which opened in May 2008 in Kapolei.

DHHL spokesman Lloyd Yonenaka said Kiewit built the agency's 50,000-square-foot, \$20 million headquarters in Kapolei and installed roads, sewer and water lines for a housing development in upcountry Maui for the agency .

"The building came in within budget and on time," Yonenaka said. "The project on Maui — same thing. We can only give them high marks."

For Kiewit, the Honolulu transit deal is the company's biggest Hawaii contract. It's also likely to significantly raise the company's profile in the community.

"We've actually been kind of under the radar, which is OK," Wilhelm said. "I guess that's over for the time being."



OUR ISLAND

Long road ahead for Salt Lake job

A widening project for a main thoroughfare has been delayed for years

[By Rob Shikina](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Nov 03, 2009

The widening of Salt Lake Boulevard has been a community priority for the past six years, neighborhood board member Lennard Pepper says.

But the entire project is decades older than that.

First started in the 1970s, the project to widen the road that runs from Puuloa Road in Mapunapuna to Kamehameha Highway by Aloha Stadium still has one mile to go and could take at least an additional six years, said Collins Lam, deputy director of the city Department of Design and Construction.

The construction, from two lanes to four, has faced several challenges that delayed the project, from getting funding to relocating utilities and drainage problems.

The city is planning to widen the last stretch at a cost of \$60 million to \$80 million, Lam said.

Salt Lake Neighborhood Board Chairman Maurice Morita said the boulevard is important as an alternate route for drivers between Honolulu and Leeward Oahu when there is congestion on Moanalua Freeway or Kamehameha Highway. But the two-lane portion of the roadway creates a bottleneck.

Already, the City Council has appropriated about \$6 million for the project's planning, Lam said. After a consultant is selected, an environmental impact statement will be prepared over two years, and then the project will be designed over another two years, Lam said. Construction alone could take two to four years, he said.

Federal funds could pay for 80 percent of the project with the rest coming from the city, he said.

In 2005 the city finished the last portion of the road to be widened -- between Bougainville Drive and Maluna Street. That portion had been delayed one year by "unforeseen conditions," including the discovery of buried gas canisters that were handled like toxic waste because no one knew what was inside.

The upcoming portion -- between Maluna and Ala Lilikoi streets -- has already been delayed by a City Council vote in February 2007 to build the transit route through Salt Lake.

The road's widening was put on hold because the city expected to finish the project in conjunction with the rail going through Salt Lake.

But in early 2009 the City Council voted to change the Salt Lake route to the airport, and the widening project was revived.

At the October neighborhood board meeting, members discussed a list of potential priorities for the neighborhood, including finishing Salt Lake Boulevard.

Pepper said the expansion project should be the neighborhood's priority.

He said traveling Honolulu-bound on the boulevard, two lanes merge into one where the previous expansion ends, creating a danger for drivers not accustomed to the area. The last project "created a hazardous situation they haven't resolved."

Find this article at:

http://www.starbulletin.com/news/20091103_Long_road_ahead_for_Salt_Lake_job.html

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

November 3, 2009

Letters to the Editor

Rail transit

Mayor's flexibility may see real test

Showing an uncanny grasp of the obvious, Mayor Hannemann has magnanimously agreed to extend the start of rail to January 2010. He described the delay as mynah (or was it minor?), thus showcasing his willingness to "be flexible and compromise."

I have a feeling his willingness to be flexible and compromise will be tested in coming months when the EIS is released and lawsuits are filed. To paraphrase Churchill: Mayor Hannemann can be counted on to do the right thing, once he has exhausted all other options.

peter chisteckoff | Mililani

Letters to the editor

For Wednesday, November 4, 2009

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Nov 04, 2009

Budget priorities are out of whack

No money for schools. Amazing. There is something wrong with our values in Hawaii. We have voted to supply over \$5 billion for a rail system (that probably will not pay for its cost and end up taxing us all more) and at the same time cut our funding to public schools. I ask you: Which is more important?

You can't have both; \$5 billion would buy us better classrooms, clean schools, safe schools, a good meal every day, the latest textbooks and computer needs, more professional teachers and students who can compete for good jobs in a global economy.

Ray Jeffs
Honolulu

Letters to the editor

For Wednesday, November 4, 2009

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Nov 04, 2009

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Ray Jeffs
Honolulu

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Letters to the Editor

For Friday, November 6, 2009

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Nov 06, 2009

Moving rail project shows leadership

Thank you for publishing the truth in your editorial, "Keep moving on rail" (Star-Bulletin, Oct. 26).

We should be applauding the mayor for his willingness to take the hits to move this project forward at a time when it is most needed. All of these people who are trying to make rail into a political issue don't get it. Ask yourself this: Wouldn't it be easier to run for a higher office by not taking on anything controversial? I'd rather have someone who is willing to stay the course on tough issues, even if it damages his political career. I am tired of do-nothing, say-no-to-everything leadership.

Keep the project moving forward!

Samson Hiritomi
Honolulu

November 7, 2009

Letters to the Editor

Rail transit

Hold public hearing on alternate systems

The last paragraph in your rail editorial (Oct. 30) really summed up where we are today on the rail project. Over the last few weeks serious problems have arisen and "sensible solutions" must be found. What could be more "letting politics get in the way" than one councilman coached by the mayor holding the key vote on approving the most expensive construction project in the history of our island?

The "sensible solution" that you call for should be to hold a public hearing that revisits the alternate systems that were not sufficiently considered in the DEIS. Until that process has been completed we will not know which project will be "the best it can be."

Geoffrey Paterson, AIA Emeritus | Kailua

Pacific Business News (Honolulu) - November 9, 2009
[/pacific/stories/2009/11/09/editorial1.html](http://pacific.bizjournals.com/pacific/stories/2009/11/09/editorial1.html)

PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS

Friday, November 6, 2009

Rail project the best job stimulus out there

Pacific Business News (Honolulu)

After spending the summer mostly silent and sullenly defensive on the progress of Honolulu's rail project, it was great to see Mayor Mufi Hannemann bounding across a stage last week for a rousing pep rally for the train.

Billed as an "update" on the \$5.5 billion rail project, this was a show, not a speech. It was a little gimmicky and more about the politically ambitious mayor than about the train.

Still, it was a well-timed and appropriately upbeat event, and a powerful statement that construction of the commuter rail system couldn't come at a better time to shore up Hawaii's wobbly economy.

While there are still arguments about the need for rail, more and more we're looking at the project as a sure-thing job creator that will help get Hawaii through this deepening downturn.

Hannemann forecasts that the decade-long project will create 10,000 jobs, including 4,000 in construction. By next year, he expects 4,000 people to be working on rail. While those numbers may be a touch optimistic, there is no question that thousands of people will be needed to lay out and build up the elevated system.

The selection of **Kiewit Pacific**, a local contractor with a solid record of accomplishing big jobs, to handle the \$483 million first phase of the rail system is also an encouraging sign that the bulk of the work will go to local people.

Hannemann is hot to get the rail work started and he's right to be worried about the temptation Oahu's transit tax fund offers to state legislators desperate to fill a \$1 billion budget shortfall.

The Senate made a tentative grab last year but quickly pulled back. Now, that \$421.5 million in the rail fund may be too irresistible, at least until the hiring starts and highly visible dirt-moving actually starts.

Even if you hate the train and plan a lifelong boycott, you have to love — or at least, like — the boost it will give to employment as Hawaii tumbles further into a recessionary trough. With economic recovery not expected to begin in earnest until 2011, those 4,000 jobs will support a lot of families and generate millions in consumer spending.

Now, that's real stimulus.

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Letters to the Editor

For Monday, November 9, 2009

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Nov 09, 2009

Get rail going to help workers

Mayor Mufi Hannemann's recent state-of-the-rail speech provided us with lots of timely and important information. It was good to learn that rail would create up to 10,000 jobs a year during the construction phase, jobs that we need right now. But what hit me the most is that if we delay this project, it would only increase the cost, or worse, jeopardize over a billion dollars of federal money that could help us out of this recession.

The mayor said, "The longer we delay, the more we're going to have to pay and the money could go away." We need these jobs and we need rail to move forward now.

M. Chung
Pearl City

Letters to the Editor

For Monday, November 9, 2009

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Nov 09, 2009

Transit project a bottomless pit

Do we really need the rail system in Honolulu? Many say yes, but I say no. Us residents are just fine with TheBus and TheCab in Honolulu. The rail will cost approximately \$4 billion to \$7 billion. Those dollars could end the Furlough Fridays and give Hawaii's students the education they deserve. Those dollars can repair potholes on our main thoroughfares and can add police patrols in our neighborhoods and highways.

Our property taxes are on a constant rise; billions less being used may drop our tax rates. Why should we have increased tax rates when we have basically no say on this matter?

I encourage people to write Mayor Hannemann and/or their district representative with their opinion on the matter at hand.

Isaiah Lee Chong
Ewa Beach



ISLAND COMMENTARY

Business leaders believe rail will be beneficial

By Gary Kai

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Nov 10, 2009

Mayor Mufi Hannemann's State of the Rail address was a very timely reminder that Oahu's rail transit project is critical to Oahu and the entire state of Hawaii.

The Hawaii Business Roundtable, which is composed of business leaders and, just as important, represents thousands of employees who live on Oahu, is committed to the rail transit project. A modern, efficient transportation system is essential to the economy, prosperity and quality of life for our island state.

The most congested traffic corridor in the state is between Kapolei and the University of Hawaii-Manoa. Oahu lacks the transit infrastructure needed to reduce that congestion and the residents and businesses are suffering because of it. Our employees and their families, friends and neighbors spend many hours in traffic to get to work or school. The quality of their lives is severely impacted, and as employers, our members are very concerned about the negative impacts of traffic on our employees' lives. Our businesses, just as all the other businesses, must spend more to deliver goods and services. And we must also remember that it impacts the visitors who come to our island. They leave with memories of this beautiful island tainted with their experiences in our traffic congestion. It is clear that we need a mass transit solution to take cars off the roads to relieve some of the congestion and, most important, to provide a more efficient and timely transportation alternative.

As the mayor reported, the Hawaii Business Roundtable conducted its own study of the city's funding plan for the rail transit project. Our analysis took into consideration the current reduced revenue projections. The analysis was scrutinized by our members, who, as business leaders, are very adept at analyzing financial plans. Only after this thorough review were we able to report that we found the overall plan to be sound and conservatively prepared.

The rail transit project is also very critical to creating jobs in our state at a time when jobs are sorely needed. We believe that the start of the rail transit will not only create jobs but will help to increase consumer and business confidence as work is begun. In our recently conducted People's Pulse survey, consumer confidence remains at an all-time low, but we believe that because of its magnitude, the start of the transit work will help to rebuild that confidence. Returning confidence in our economy is an important step in our state's economic recovery.

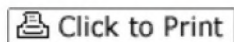
The Hawaii Business Roundtable fully supports the city's rail transit plan. We believe that it is time for all sectors -- county, state, federal -- and the entire community to work together as quickly as possible to move this project forward: for all of our futures and for the future of generations to come.

Gary Kai is executive director of the Hawaii Business Roundtable.

Find this article at:

http://www.starbulletin.com/editorials/20091110_Business_leaders_believe_rail_will_be_beneficial.html

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EDITORIAL

Leave tax policy alone

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Nov 10, 2009

Hawaii legislators are under pressure by the state's powerful public employee unions to increase taxes to shield their members from pay reductions that are plaguing the private sector. Hiking the general excise tax is not a solution -- it would raise retail prices of goods and services that have become unaffordable for many during the recession.

State employee unions have refused to accept any reduction in hourly wages, instead accepting labor contracts that include furloughs -- days off without pay. The United Public Workers, the union of blue-collar state employees, has yet to approve even that partial remedy to the state's budget crisis.

Most residents understand the consequences of increasing the state's general excise tax -- a tax at multiple levels -- and so do some legislators.

"I don't want to raise taxes because it will be so counterproductive," House Speaker Calvin Say told the Star-Bulletin's Richard Borreca. "People may not buy anything but the basics."

Say suggests that the state may need to take revenue from the hotel room tax from the counties and take back a share of the excise tax collected in Honolulu that now goes to the rail project. Grabbing the hotel tax dollars from the counties would merely shift the revenue of that tax, increased from 7.25 percent to 8.25 percent this year, from one level of government to the other. Withholding excise tax revenue from rail transit could have dire consequences for a transportation project badly needed to stem traffic congestion.

One method of cutting state expenses would be to adopt a mandatory 10-hours-a-day, four-day work week, a system successfully implemented in Utah in August 2008 and tried out in Hawaii late last year, with good results. Sixty percent of the Utah city employees who preceded state employees working under that system reported higher productivity and improvement of citizen access under the system.

A Utah state official has said that the four-day work week resulted in a savings of \$700,000 a year in energy and janitorial costs, less than projections based on high gas prices and utility rates, which have fallen. It also may have contributed to reducing more than \$4 million in overtime payments.

After a three-month experiment in Hawaii last year, the Hawaii Government Employees Association appears to have balked at making it permanent, although it is allowed by the labor contract. A union leader pointed to problems of members finding adult day care and working around a second job.

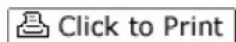
While the Utah savings are a small fraction of the \$1 billion needed by fiscal 2013 to balance the Hawaii

budget, it is a workable piece toward a collective solution. Instead, today's stalemate seems to exemplify the lack of flexibility in dealing with the recession.

Increasing taxes or diverting tax revenue are simplistic and unacceptable alternatives while non-government workers struggle to make ends meet.

Find this article at:

http://www.starbulletin.com/editorials/20091110_Leave_tax_policy_alone.html



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November 10, 2009

Letters to the Editor

Rail Transit

Project invests in our island's future

As a local boy who has been studying on the Mainland for the past three years, I've been following news from back in Hawaii with keen interest.

I've been particularly encouraged by all of the good news on the rail project because I believe that rail transit is one of the best investments that we can make for our island's future.

Not only will construction of the project create about 11,000 jobs in construction, engineering and related fields, but also once the rail line is complete it will service the tens of thousands of new homes expected to be built in West Oahu and the 30,000 new jobs projected for Kapolei by 2025. Those new homes and new jobs will eventually be filled by members of my generation. That's why it's so important for Hawaii's young people to step up and support the economic engine that is Honolulu's rail project.

Through affordable housing and smart job growth in transit-oriented development zones, the rail will provide Hawaii's young people — particularly those like me who are away on the Mainland working and studying — with an opportunity to one day return to the Islands and enjoy the high quality of life we enjoyed when we were just keiki.

Tyler Dos Santos-Tam | Yale University, New Haven, Conn.

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LETTERS

Lame on trains

NOV 11, 2009 |



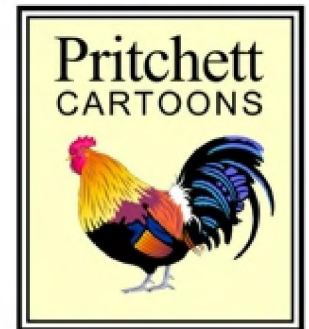
Color me disappointed about the *Weekly's* lame coverage of the new Honolulu rail line. The paper either ignores the rail issue, which is mind-boggling when considering that rail is less polluting and more energy efficient than cars, or gives a reheated version of old news like the Kamehameha Schools' rail report. The dailies and TV news covered the school's rail report back in August, yet the *Weekly* treated it like breaking news ("On the fast track," 10/28). A progressive, pro-environment newspaper like the *Weekly* should pay more attention to rail. I hope that the *Weekly* gets on board.

Scott Nakasone
Kapolei

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Letters to the Editor

For Thursday, November 12, 2009

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Nov 12, 2009

Engineers note rail's limitations

The Hannemann administration says rail will reduce traffic congestion. What it is saying is that in 2030, on the day rail opens, 840 commuters per hour who used to take their cars will switch to bus/rail.

What it is also saying is on that same day, there will be (compared to today) 6,000 additional car commuters per hour during rush hour trying to get on the H-1 freeway.

We all know H-1 during rush hour is full today. Where will these 6,000 cars go? Will they fit on H-1? No! They will be stacked up all over West Oahu in the morning and East Oahu in the afternoon. They will cause a massive traffic jam.

The source for this data: honolulutransit.org, then "Library-Alternatives Analysis Chapter 3," pages 3-25.

Stop the transit tax. The Hannemann administration engineers say rail will fail to improve mobility through the H-1 corridor on Day One.

John Brizzle
Palolo Valley

Letters to the Editor

For Thursday, November 12, 2009

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Nov 12, 2009

Rail needed for next generation

As a local boy who has been studying on the mainland for the past three years, I've been particularly encouraged by all of the good news on the rail project because I believe that rail transit is one of the best investments that we can make for our island's future. Not only will construction of the project create 11,000 high-skilled jobs in construction, engineering and related fields, but once the rail line is complete, it will serve the tens of thousands of new homes expected to be built in places like Ho'opili in West Oahu and the 30,000 new jobs projected for Kapolei by 2025.

Those new homes and new jobs will eventually be filled by members of my generation, and that's why it's so important for Hawaii's young people to step up and support the economic engine which is Honolulu's rail project. Through affordable housing and smart job growth in transit-oriented development zones, the rail will provide Hawaii's young people with an opportunity to one day return to the islands and enjoy the same high quality of life we enjoyed when we were just keiki.

Tyler Dos Santos-Tam

Yale University, New Haven, Conn.



TheBus not braking for Furlough Friday

The current schedule is in effect as ridership numbers are tallied

By [Rob Shikina](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Nov 15, 2009

TheBus is keeping its schedule the same on Furlough Fridays because it's too early to tell what impact furloughs for public school teachers and state workers are having on bus ridership and whether adjustments are needed, said Oahu Transit Services President Roger Morton.

On Oct. 30, the second Furlough Friday -- the only one tallied so far in terms of ridership -- the change was insignificant, Morton said.

But transit officials are watching other ridership changes, such as a 2 percent drop in the number of passengers since July 1 that Morton says is linked to the weak economy.

TheBus drivers use an electronic system to count riders for one week every month. That count is averaged out to the weekday ridership for the month.

Deborah Limoz of Pearl City, who was catching a bus in downtown this weekend, said she hasn't noticed a decline in ridership on regular days or on furlough days.

"The first Furlough Friday was really weird," she said. "There was a lot of people on the bus."

Morton said the weak economy has shrunk the largest category of bus riders -- people going to work -- and the fourth-largest passenger category -- isle visitors. Students and senior citizens comprise the second- and third-largest customer groups, respectively.

In September, Hawaii's unemployment was 7.2 percent with about 47,000 people out of work. Those who used to catch the bus for work usually do not use the bus when they're not working, leading to a drop in ridership, Morton said.

Visitor counts this year through September were also down 5.8 percent, Morton said.

The decrease also comes after a hike in bus fares on July 1 to \$2.25 from \$2. Another 25-cent hike is scheduled for July 1.

SPOTTING A TREND

Ridership increased 14.7 percent from 2005 to 2009. By fiscal year, ending June 30, here are the ridership figures and percent change from the year earlier:

Year	Ridership	% change
2009	77,329,670	10.8%
2008	69,759,954	-2.8%
2007	71,749,456	1.9%
2006	70,384,355	4.4%
2005	67,406,827	

Source: Oahu Transit Services

Morton said the fare hike could lead to fewer riders, but added that overall the 2 percent dip is minor compared to an 18 percent increase in passengers since 2004.

Wayne Yoshioka, director of the city Department of Transportation Services, said with the recent sag in ridership, the city is looking at shifting services to alleviate overcrowding on high-demand routes.

"We still have routes even now that are overcrowded," he said.

Meanwhile, revenue for TheBus is up about 5.4 percent this fiscal year because of the fare increase. TheBus officials will continue monitoring ridership before making changes, possibly in January.

Yoshioka said Honolulu continues to have one of the nation's highest public transportation riderships per person. He said the dip in ridership may even out before next June and does not raise a concern about demand for the planned \$5.3 billion rail transit system.

Find this article at:

http://www.starbulletin.com/news/20091115_TheBus_not_braking_for_Furlough_Friday.html

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November 15, 2009

Letters to the Editor

Rail transit

Consider Hawaii's future without rail

There is no place like home, especially when home is Hawaii. Many of us local kids share the dream of moving back to Hawaii to be with loved ones and raise our families. But the reality is sobering.

With the increase in population density, difficulty in finding jobs and affordable housing, high cost of living and traffic gridlock, living in Hawaii may not be practical or a choice for us. Our children will see Grandma and Grandpa once a year for the holidays, picnics at the beach with our entire ohana will be a rarity, and our families will suffer.

Hawaii is a special community where we are close and care for each other and we appreciate the importance of family. Rail, alone, cannot prevent the effect of the more "Hot, Flat and Crowded" world. However, rail can help in so many ways to address the difficulties facing our community and help position Hawaii for the future. This is why we support the rail project.

I respect the opinions of those who may disagree, but I urge them, at this historic time, to apply careful thought to this complex issue, and consider what the future price to our children and families will be without rail.

Jonathan khil | Honolulu

November 15, 2009

Letters to the Editor

Rail transit

System will greatly better life for users

With the rail-transit project gearing up to start, the City and County of Honolulu has a great opportunity to provide residents of Oahu with one of the most reliable forms of transportation available. The efficiency with which rail transit operates is well documented in other cities throughout the world and it would be no different here.

As a suburban commuter traveling partway through the Kapolei-to-Honolulu corridor I'm part of a large population that must always deal with two potential issues — unexpected traffic delays and parking. Once fully operational, rail transit could virtually eliminate this worry by offering an option for just about anyone who travels along this stretch.

Rail transit will change life for a lot of us who commute along the route, and it will definitely improve the quality of life for those who take advantage of this form of transportation.

Bryan Mukai | Pearl City

Letters to the Editor

For Sunday, November 15, 2009

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Nov 15, 2009

Creation of jobs a reason for rail

I don't care about the rail project one way or the other. I live far from the route and will probably never ride a train. But I do care about fixing our economy and creating jobs in this recession. If rail construction can create 4,000 jobs next year like Mayor Mufi Hannemann said in his "state of the rail" speech, then I will support rail for that reason, and that reason alone.

Pete Donohue
Ala Moana

November 16, 2009

Honolulu transit tax collections drop 30 percent to \$8.9 million in October

*By Sean Hao
Advertiser Staff Writer*

Tax collections needed to build Honolulu's planned \$5.5 billion elevated train fell 30 percent to \$8.9 million last month. That's the lowest amount since February 2007, when just \$2.2 million was collected during the second month after the surcharge was enacted.

Through the first four months of the fiscal year transit tax collections are down nearly 6 percent from the year-ago period to \$52 million, based on figures provided by the state Department of Taxation. Tax collections have fallen amid declining visitor arrivals and rising unemployment.

That's taking a toll on tax collections needed to build Honolulu's planned 20-mile train from East Kapolei to Ala Moana. The sluggish economy forced city officials earlier this year to sharply lower transit tax collection forecasts from \$16.5 million a month to \$13.7 million a month.

Through the first four months of the current fiscal year collections are averaging about \$13 million a month under a half-percentage-point surcharge that was added to the general excise tax in Honolulu in January 2007 to fund the rail. All transit tax collection figures in this story exclude a 10 percent administrative fee retained by the state, which collects the taxes.

City Transportation Director Wayne Yoshioka was unavailable for comment on the drop in tax collections. City officials have said that they expect lower transit tax collections to be offset by lower construction costs and a future economic rebound.

The city also plans to rely on increased federal funds — including diverting \$305 million in federal money intended for TheBus — to help make up for the lower-than-anticipated tax revenue.

The city expects transit tax revenues to raise an inflation-adjusted \$3.69 billion through 2022 when the surcharge expires, under an August-dated version of the city's financial plan. In the spring of 2011 the federal government is expected to announce that it will give the city \$1.55 billion to help pay for the project.



November 17, 2009

Rail tax revenue down 30%

\$8.9 million collected last month is lowest since February 2007

*By Sean Hao
Advertiser Staff Writer*

Tax collections needed to build Honolulu's planned \$5.5 billion elevated rail transit line fell 30 percent in October from a year earlier. The total collected — \$8.9 million — was the lowest amount since February 2007, when just \$2.2 million was collected during the second month after the excise tax surcharge was enacted.

Through the first four months of the 2009-2010 fiscal year, transit tax collections are down nearly 6 percent from the same period a year ago, to \$52 million, based on figures provided by the state Department of Taxation. Tax collections have fallen amid declining visitor arrivals and rising unemployment.

That's taking a toll on money needed to build Honolulu's planned 20-mile train from East Kapolei to Ala Moana. The sluggish economy forced city officials earlier this year to lower transit tax collection forecasts from \$16.5 million a month to \$13.7 million a month.

Through the first four months of this fiscal year, collections are averaging about \$13 million a month. The money is raised from a half-percentage-point surcharge added to the general excise tax in Honolulu in January 2007 to pay for the rail system. (All transit tax collection figures in this story do not include a 10 percent administrative fee retained by the state, which collects the taxes.)

City Transportation Director Wayne Yoshioka was unavailable for comment on the drop in tax collections. City officials have said that they expect lower transit tax collections to be offset by lower construction costs and a future economic rebound.

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November 17, 2009

Mayor to announce rail labor agreement at 2:30 news conference

*By Sean Hao
Advertiser Staff Writer*

Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann this afternoon is expected to announce the signing of a Project Labor Agreement with trade unions that will likely work on the city's planned \$5.5 billion rail project.

The mayor has scheduled a news conference for 2:30 p.m. at Honolulu Hale. Government agencies use so called PLAs to try to avoid strikes or other labor disruptions on major construction projects. In exchange, project workers typically are guaranteed union-level wages and benefits.

Reach Sean Hao at shao@honoluluadvertiser.com or 525-8093.



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 04:00AM First Light
 05:00AM America In The Morning with Jim Bohannon
 06:00AM KPUA Morning News with anchor Ken Hupp
 09:00AM Community Forum
 10:00AM Rush Limbaugh
 01:00PM Dr. Dean Edell
 02:00PM Dateline: Washington
 03:00PM Sporting News
 04:00PM Sports Byline with Ron Barr
 07:00PM Coast to Coast

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Hilo, Hawaii News, Sports, & Information

Tuesday, November 17, 2009

HAWAII NEWS

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Posted: Tuesday, November 17th, 2009 4:45 AM HST

Honolulu transit tax receipts drop 30 percent

By Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — Receipts from the Honolulu transit tax designed to pay the city's planned rail line fell 30 percent in October from a year earlier to \$8.9 million.

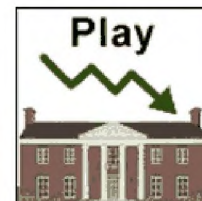
Tax collections have dropped amid declining visitor arrivals and rising unemployment.

This has depressed tax revenues needed to build Honolulu's planned 20-mile train from East Kapolei to Ala Moana.

Earlier this year, city officials sharply lowered transit tax collection forecasts from \$16.5 million a month to \$13.7 million a month.

The revenues result from a half-percentage-point surcharge added to the general excise tax in Honolulu in January 2007.

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Pacific Business News (Honolulu) - November 17, 2009
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PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS

Tuesday, November 17, 2009, 2:59pm HAST

City, unions agree on deal for rail project

Pacific Business News (Honolulu) - by [Chad Blair](#)

Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann announced Tuesday that the city has reached an agreement with 12 labor unions that guarantees no work slowdowns or strikes on the proposed \$5.5 billion Oahu rail system.

The Rapid Transit Stabilization Agreement protects Honolulu against strikes, lockouts and other job disruptions.

Project contractors are required to hire both union and non-union workers at comparable pay and standardized work hours, days and conditions.

"The importance of this labor agreement goes beyond ensuring local jobs," Hannemann said in announcing the deal. "By preventing any potential work stoppages, it helps to keep the project on time and on budget, which benefits taxpayers."

The labor unions that signed the agreement include Hawaii Carpenters Local 745, Iron Workers Local 625, Operative Plasterers' & Cement Masons' International Association Local 630, Operating Engineers Local 3, the International Union of Bricklayers & Allied Craft Workers Local 1, and the International Union of Painters & Allied Craft Workers Local 1791.

In related news, the city and Kiewit Pacific formally signed the construction contract for the first phase of the rail route, a 6.5-mile portion that will run from East Kapolei to Pearl Highlands near Leeward Community College.

Beginning Wednesday, the city will seek proposals for the second construction phase of the rail route, a 3.9-mile section of the elevated system from Pearl Highlands to Aloha Stadium.

Separate contracts are scheduled to be awarded in 2010 for the train storage and maintenance facility in Waipahu, and for the manufacturing and shipment of the core systems that includes the train vehicles.

Train service for the first leg of the transit route is scheduled to begin in 2012, with full service along the entire 20-mile route from East Kapolei to Ala Moana in 2019.

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Letters to the Editor

For Tuesday, November 17, 2009

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Nov 17, 2009

City should try private bus stops

Maybe it's time for the city to privatize the bus stops. Many cities do that while they take federal money for transportation.

Bus stops could be sold/leased/rented for a nominal fee, and the business or organization could put a small sign denoting ownership. Then police could respond to calls to have vagrants and druggies removed legally.

Many bus stops are approaching critical mass now, or should I say "critical mess." Maybe bus riders would patronize the businesses that sponsor.

If you say that the Outdoor Circle, which objects to signs, would complain, why not have it offer a very nominal fee to adopt the bus stops and privatize them and put a small sign?

As the weather gets worse this winter, far too many bus riders are left standing in the rain while the bus stops have become smelly camp sites.

Try it on a trial basis.

T. Ruby
Honolulu



November 18, 2009

Rail gets no-strike promise

Deal aims to keep project on schedule and within budget

By Sean Hao
Advertiser Staff Writer

Contractors working on Honolulu's planned \$5.5 billion train project will be required to provide workers with union-type benefits, under an agreement announced yesterday by Mayor Mufi Hannemann.

In exchange, major trade unions have agreed to not strike or disrupt the availability of labor during the project's duration. The city expects to break ground on the 20-mile elevated rail line between East Kapolei and Ala Moana early next year. The project is expected to open in phases between 2012 and 2019.

Thousands of jobs are expected to be created and the agreement between the city and 12 major labor unions should ensure the use of local labor and high-quality construction, Hannemann said. The agreement also will help keep the project on budget and on schedule, he said.

"What this is all about is to minimize work slowdowns and stoppages," Hannemann said at a news conference at Honolulu Hale. "This is a working relationship with those who have a vested interest in making sure their workers are working."

Non-union contractors working on state projects already must pay union-level wages. Under the agreement, roughly one-third of non-union worker wages will go into union trust funds. That money will then be used to provide non-union workers with union-type vacation, health care, pension and other benefits while they work on the project.

It's the first time the city has signed such an agreement, Hannemann said. However, similar agreements have worked successfully in Seattle and San Francisco, he said.

The use of such agreements on federally funded projects was banned by President George W. Bush. That executive order was overturned by President Obama. According to the Web site of the Springfield, Va.-based National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation, project labor agreements result in cost overruns and higher construction costs. That's because they ban the use of non-union contractors that want to make lower-cost bids and lock out employees who don't want to join a union, according to the group.

Ron Taketa, financial secretary of the 7,200-member Hawaii Carpenters Union, said yesterday's agreement does not force any contractors to pay higher wages, nor does it does not force them to unionize. What the agreement does is assure cost certainty by eliminating the risk of labor disruptions, Taketa said.

"The unions have agreed that there will be no work stoppages or slowdowns for the duration of the project so the city can expect that the project will proceed uninterrupted by any disruptions or slowdowns on the part of the union," he said.

Other private sector labor unions signing the agreement include the Operating Engineers, Iron Workers and Laborers International Union of North America.

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Honolulu Mayor Inks Labor Pact for \$5.4B Rail Project

11/18/2009

Associated Press/AP Online

Text size: [A](#) [A](#)

HONOLULU - Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann and 12 local labor unions have inked an agreement that will pay union workers prevailing wages to build Honolulu's rail transit project while guaranteeing that they cannot delay construction by striking.

Among those signing the Project Labor Agreement on Tuesday were unions representing carpenters, heavy equipment operators, iron workers and roofers.

Hannemann says he favors the pact because it will ensure that local workers are employed on the \$5.4 billion rail line.

Construction of the 20-mile rail line is expected to begin next year and is slated to be completed in 2019.

Also, the city and Kiewit Pacific Company on Tuesday signed a contract to begin construction of the first 6.5-mile phase of the project.

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City signs \$483M rail contract

The deal for the first phase stipulates that tax funds cannot be used for anything else

[By Gary T. Kubota](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Nov 18, 2009

A deal signed yesterday to get the city's \$5.3 billion rail project rolling means that the general excise tax money raised for the project is off-limits to state legislators trying to plug Hawaii's \$1 billion budget gap, according to Mayor Mufi Hannemann.

At a news conference yesterday, city officials and executives from contractor Kiewit Pacific Co. signed a \$483 million contract to build the first 6.5 miles of the 20-mile rail transit system, which would eventually stretch from East Kapolei to Ala Moana Center.

Hannemann said the contract formally encumbers rail transit funds raised from increasing the state general excise tax by half a percentage point on Oahu.

"Therefore it cannot be shifted or used by anyone for any other purposes," he said.

Several legislators have suggested raiding money from the GET increase to help ease the state's money woes.

State House Finance Chairman Marcus Oshiro said he supports the rail project but needs to determine whether the funds are indeed encumbered.

Oshiro said he wants to see whether the state could borrow the money or use it for bond financing to help meet financial shortfalls in the schools, hospitals and services for the aged, blind and disabled.

"I too have responsibilities. ... We all feel the effect of the current recession," he said. "I need to keep all the options open."

But Hannemann is putting the rail on a fast track, even though the environmental impact statement for the project still has not received state and federal approval.

Oahu Rail Transit Closer To Groundbreaking



The city signed a formal agreement to begin construction on the first 6 miles of its 5.5 Billion Rail Project.

[[Watch](#)]



Hannemann said he is hoping to break ground for construction in January, and he has not received any indication there is a problem with the city's environmental impact statement. He said he would emphasize one point to those reviewing the document: "People want this project and they want it now."

State Sen. Colleen Hanabusa said state and federal officials review the environmental impact statement based on law and whether it provides enough information to make a decision and not on politics.

"It's not wise to belittle a process that's very much a part of our law," she said.

Hanabusa said whether one supports or opposes rail, people do not want to be in the same situation as the Hawaii Superferry, a project halted due to the lack of an adequate environmental impact statement.

The Hannemann administration plans to issue a request for proposals today for the second phase — a 3.9-mile project from Pearl Highlands Shopping Center to Aloha Stadium, with construction scheduled to start in 2011.

The administration also signed a "Rapid Transit Stabilization Agreement" with labor unions yesterday, guaranteeing no work slowdowns or stoppages.

Hannemann said the agreement helps ensure the use of local labor.

Hawaii Carpenters Union official Ronald I. Taketa said with 45 percent of the organization's members unemployed, the project could not have come at a better time.

Kiewit Pacific executive Lance Wilhelm said he expects that more than 700 people will be employed in the first phase by his company and subcontractors. Hannemann has said the 20-mile project is expected to employ 4,000 construction jobs and 10,000 new jobs.

As of July, state tax officials reported collecting some \$354 million in revenues from the general excise tax increase on Oahu.

Find this article at:

http://www.starbulletin.com/news/20091118_City_signs_483M_rail_contract.html

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.



November 19, 2009

Traffic-easing projects still on track

*By Curtis Lum
Advertiser Staff Writer*

The state is moving ahead with two major freeway projects that are aimed at easing traffic gridlock on O'ahu during the morning and afternoon rush-hour periods.

The Department of Transportation yesterday presented an update on its H-1 Freeway afternoon contraflow and Middle Street widening projects to the Citizen Advisory Committee of the Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization. The total estimated cost of the projects is \$155 million and the work is intended to ease west-bound traffic in the afternoon and east-bound congestion in the morning.

Ed Sniffen of the DOT's design branch told the committee that both projects are needed because of the amount of time and fuel wasted by motorists who deal with the gridlock each day. A 2007 study determined that a driver wastes 20 gallons of gas and 30 hours each year while stuck in traffic.

"I don't need to tell you guys that our studies show that we've got congestion," Sniffen said. "You sit in it every day."

The first project would add a contraflow lane on the H-1 Freeway in the 'ewa direction from the Radford Drive overpass to the Waiawa interchange. During nonpeak times, Sniffen said, that drive should take about 8 minutes, but during the height of traffic the commute can take an additional 10 to 17 minutes.

He said the DOT has some design ideas, but it will be up to the contractor to design and build the project, which is estimated to cost \$55 million. Sniffen said some of the requirements include that one lane be added and that it be at least 11 feet wide and have 6-foot shoulders.

The state hopes to advertise for bids next month and award a contract in June 2010. The construction should take 10 months and be completed in early 2012, Sniffen said.

The Middle Street project is more extensive and carries a hefty \$100 million price tag. The project involves the stretch of freeway from the Ola Lane overpass to Vineyard Boulevard.

Because the state has to do an environment assessment, the project won't go out to bid until at least late 2010. If all goes as planned, the work should be completed in mid-2014, Sniffen said.

He said the idea is to reduce the bottleneck in that area by eliminating the daily traffic jam at the merge outside the Middle Street tunnel. Studies have shown that improvements could shave 10 to 20 minutes off a daily commute.

"This is by far the worst bottleneck in the state," Sniffen said. "It's been congested since it was built and they've studied it in every decade. The governor told us enough studying already."

He said options include restriping the lanes, which Sniffen said isn't the preferred option, or adding a new lane. A new lane would require removing or altering six major abutments along the route.

Sniffen said this will mean some land on Farrington High School will have to be used, as well as

possibly some private property. He said officials hope that they won't have to do this.

"One of the things that we committed to the governor is that we're not going to take private property if not absolutely necessary," Sniffen said.



Mayor looks more like a candidate

[By Richard Borreca](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Nov 19, 2009

Mayor Mufi Hannemann took a step closer toward officially entering the race for governor last night as he hosted a \$500-a-ticket fundraiser to fuel his campaign.

Hannemann wrapped up his speech by saying that while he has not yet made up his mind, U.S. Sen. Dan Inouye is lobbying him to run for governor.

"There is no secret, my friends, and I will say it tonight that Senator Inouye is encouraging us to seek the top seat in Hawaii," Hannemann said.

Inouye's office did not respond to calls for comment.

Hannemann told the crowd at the Sheraton Waikiki that he is still waiting.

"I am not going to declare tonight, the reason being I have unfinished business here at City Hall," he said. "I am not ready yet to say the job is completed."

He told the crowd that the city's rail transit project is likely to bring in thousands of new construction jobs.

Appearing for Hannemann were Maui Mayor Charmaine Tavares and Big Island Mayor Billy Kenoi.

"I got to say, 'Thank you, Mayor Mufi, for your leadership,'" Kenoi said.

Co-chairman Dean Okimoto said the campaign had hoped to sell between 800 and 1,000 tickets.

"I think we sold 1,000," Okimoto said, which translates to \$500,000 grossed in a single night.

The campaign is considered exploratory but under state law is a functioning campaign for governor.

Hannemann has not officially declared his can- didacy.

However, his campaign has held 11 fundraisers, including the one last night, as well as gatherings in Los Angeles and Denver.

Guests last night could munch their way through preparations by some of Hawaii's high-profile chefs, including Russell Siu, Chai Chaowasaree, Roy Yamaguchi, Sam Choy, DK Kodama, and Goran Streng.

At the end of July, Hannemann listed campaign contributions of \$1.2 million.

In comparison, U.S. Rep. Neil Abercrombie, Hannemann's would-be Democratic primary opponent, has reported raising \$489,000.

Abercrombie declared his candidacy last spring.

Hannemann's campaign Web page lists various groups of supporters, including "Engineers for Mufi" with 187 names and "Women for Mufi" with 110 supporters.

The main roster of supporters is an A-list of business and community leaders, ranging from Walter Dods, a longtime Honolulu banker and part of the local political brain trust for Inouye and former Gov. George Ariyoshi, to Russell Okata, the local Democratic Party national committeeman and retired Hawaii Government Employees Association executive director.

Hannemann's campaign also lists some prominent Republicans as supporters, including former City Councilman John Henry Felix, restaurant businessman Eddie Flores and Stuart Ho.

Hannemann ran unsuccessfully for Congress in 1986 and 1990 and for mayor in 2000.

In 2004, he won the mayor's race and was re-elected in 2008, carefully noting that he might leave office to run for another political post.

Find this article at:

http://www.starbulletin.com/news/20091119_Mayor_looks_more_like_a_candidate.html

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November 20, 2009

Letters to the Editor

Roads

Street surfaces in a deplorable state

It is rather disturbing that the mayor et al find the rail funds so easy to access and yet allow our street surfaces to deteriorate to the point that would do a Third World city proud! They have been in that deplorable condition for years in some cases.

Witness upper Keeaumoku Street, Lunalilo Home Road, Keāhole Street, Punchbowl Street mauka of Beretania and so on. The list is endless! I would suppose they, along with the airport, will be upgraded just in time for the November 2011 APEC meeting.

J. FORD MURRAY | Honolulu

November 21, 2009

Letters to the Editor

Rail transit

Modernize roads for faster, cheaper relief

Mayor Hannemann misread the meaning of Kiewit's lower than expected bid. It just means his experts and Kiewit's couldn't estimate 10 percent of the project's cost any closer than \$90 million.

And most money taken from O'ahu gets paid to someone else's engineers, systems designers, managers, etc., and to someone else's manufacturers of goods like steel and rail cars.

And the cost never ends. The mayor's experts designed rail to run at a loss. Borrowed money is never repaid. Interest payments never stop.

And major redesign of O'ahu, like Kapolei, becomes impossible. Sensible or not, O'ahu's development will be dictated by unmovable train tracks ... even when things change, as all things do.

Let's modernize our neglected, badly designed roads instead, to get faster, less expensive relief using our own engineers, architects, etc. For starters, add up-and-over ramps on Dillingham for trucks returning to the docks from Waikiki. Remove those gas-wasting left-turn lights!

GEORGE L. BERISH | Honolulu

The Washington Post

Safety issue lurks under Dulles rail bridge plan

Federal transit agency investigates delay in testing foundations built in 1977

Washington Post Staff Writer

By Lisa Rein

Sunday, November 22, 2009

Thirty-two years ago, the Virginia transportation department drove dozens of steel pilings 50 feet into the ground near the West Falls Church Metro station. Encased in concrete, the pilings formed foundations that one day could hold up a bridge carrying Metro trains across Interstate 66 to Dulles International Airport.

The foundations sat under the Orange Line tracks, the highway and the Dulles Toll Road undisturbed and forgotten. In one spot, between the Metrorail tracks, an unfinished eight-foot-tall concrete column stands atop a foundation. With its cap of rebar sprouts, it has served as nothing more than a curiosity for train riders.

Now Metro is being extended to Dulles. And the condition of those footings is at the center of a federal safety inquiry because of concerns that any bridge built on them could collapse if there was a structural failure.

At issue is whether enough testing has been done on the pilings within the pier foundations. Until federal officials intervened, Dulles Transit Partners, the contractor building the first 11.7

miles of the \$5.2 billion, 23-mile Silver Line, resisted testing most of the foundations, according to documents obtained by The Washington Post through Freedom of Information Act requests and interviews.

"We have genuine, factual concerns about their engineering plan," said Peter M. Rogoff, the head of the Federal Transit Administration, which is conducting an investigation.

Dulles Transit Partners has done load-bearing tests on pilings in two foundations and has agreed as a result of the inquiry to test pilings in seven more, but the contractor has no plans to test pilings in two others, documents show.

Without load-bearing tests, there is no way to determine whether the pier foundations can bear the weight of the bridge and the trains running between East Falls Church and Wiehle Avenue in Reston.

Dulles Transit Partners spokesman Howard

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The Washington Post

Safety issue lurks under Dulles rail bridge plan

N. Menaker called the safety tests "an ongoing conversation" among the contractor, the FTA and the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, which is overseeing the construction.

"It's never a matter of some hard-and-fast position of a contractor," he said.

Rogoff said he is concerned about management of the project by the airports authority, which provided "unacceptable" and "sloppy" responses when asked by his staff whether Dulles Transit Partners is cutting corners on safety. He cited "problems with the authority's representations to us . . . that raise questions as to all of the other representations" the authority has made on the safety of the bridge design.

Tara Hamilton, an airports authority spokeswoman, said officials managing the rail project met last week with the FTA and are preparing a testing plan.

"We want to make it very clear . . . that we are responsible for the project," she said. "We appreciate them giving us guidance about what they're looking for."

Advertisement

An advertisement for LifeLock identity theft protection. The background is dark blue. The text is in white and red. It says "don't delay" in red, "get proven, proactive identity theft protection" in white, and "CALL NOW" in red. Below that is the phone number "1-888-896-1878" in large white digits. At the bottom is the LifeLock logo, which consists of a red circle with a white padlock icon, followed by the text "LifeLock" and " #1 in Identity Theft Protection" in smaller white text.

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November 23, 2009

Honolulu officials faulted for rejecting ground-level trains

*By Sean Hao
Advertiser Staff Writer*

The last time the city studied the viability of a ground-level train through Honolulu's urban core, there was no medical school or Kaka'ako Walmart and several high-rise luxury condominiums had yet to be built.

The 1998 study, along with another conducted in the early 1980s, also preceded the widespread adoption of accessible low-floor light rail vehicles and train power systems that don't require overhead wires.

City officials say those studies prove that an entirely elevated \$5.5 billion commuter rail is Honolulu's best option. However, proponents of a ground-level train in urban Honolulu argue that those earlier studies are outdated and inadequate.

"A lot has changed" since those studies were conducted, said Jeff Nishi, president of the American Institute of Architects Hawaii's Honolulu chapter.

The AIA, Kamehameha Schools and others contend a rail system built at least partially at grade would cost less and have less visual impact. The city maintains that a ground-level train would operate at slower speeds and generate lower ridership and higher long-term costs.

Just how much a partially at-grade train would cost and how many people it would carry is unclear. That's because the city eliminated an at-grade light rail system from consideration before conducting a key environmental impact study released this spring. Instead, the options explored by the city included an all-elevated train, managed highways and an expanded bus system.

The last time the city studied the feasibility of an at-grade train was in 1998. That study found that a ground-level train running through Honolulu's urban core was feasible. However, the copy of the study provided by the city to The Advertiser under a Freedom of Information request did not include cost or ridership estimates, nor did it compare the performance of an at-grade train against any other transit alternatives.

The 1998 study found that Hotel Street would be a good at-grade transit path through Downtown because that street already is dedicated to buses. However, a Downtown-to-University of Hawaii route via King Street would likely reduce traffic flow, according to the study. The report did not study the feasibility of an at-grade train route down Halekauwila Street. Current plans call for an elevated train that runs down Halekauwila.

Before 1998, the last time an at-grade rail was studied in-depth was in 1982, according to the city. That study found that a partially at-grade light rail system was slightly inferior to an entirely elevated train.

wires were concern

The study recommended the city build a more expensive fixed-guideway train system that would operate at faster speeds and generate higher ridership than a partially at-grade light rail system. At the time, part of the concern about light rail was the negative aesthetics of overhead catenary wires.

The city did not follow through with plans to build a train system in the 1980s or 1990s. However, plans to build a train were kick-started after Mayor Mufi Hannemann took office in 2005.

City Council member Gary Okino said findings from studies conducted during the 1980s and 1990s remain valid today. If anything, an increase in traffic congestion since the 1980s makes at-grade rail even less attractive today, Okino said.

Because an elevated train operates on an exclusive right of way, it can operate at higher speeds and generate higher ridership. In contrast, a cheaper-to-build at-grade train would generate lower ridership while increasing traffic congestion, Okino said.

"There's a tremendous difference in terms of costs, efficiency, speed, capacity, everything," he said. "I don't care what kind of studies you do, or how technology has changed. There's no comparison between an elevated and an at-grade system."

The most recent study of an at-grade Honolulu rail system was conducted this spring by New Jersey transportation consultant Phil Craig for the Kamehameha Schools. Honolulu could save an estimated \$1.7 billion by building about half of its planned elevated commuter train system at ground level, according to the study.

Craig proposed building the train system at ground level from East Kapolei to Waipahu and from Middle Street to Ala Moana Center. Only the segment from Waipahu to Middle Street, or about 10 out of a total 20 miles, would be built on an elevated guideway.

Because it would mix with automobile traffic, the proposed at-grade train would operate at slower speeds than an entirely elevated train. However, the Craig study proposed an alternative route that could place more Downtown commuters closer to their destination. The current route of the planned elevated train travels the periphery of Downtown by running along Nimitz Highway to Halekauwila Street, then Kapi'olani Boulevard.

Craig proposed a route that would enter Downtown via North King Street to Hotel Street, then makai on Richards Street to South King Street or Queen Street. Heading 'ewa, the ground-level train would travel from Kapi'olani Boulevard to South Street, then South Beretania Street to Richards Street, then reconnect at Hotel Street.

new technology

Modern train technology that doesn't require overhead power lines would allow at-grade trains to travel primarily along curbside lanes now used by buses, Craig said. Before such technology became available, a light rail system in Honolulu would have needed to use lanes in the middle of the street. That would be more detrimental to traffic than running in curb lanes, which already are heavily used by buses, Craig said.

"Ten years ago they were not able to use the curb lanes for light rail because of the tree cover along Kapi'olani as well as Dillingham," he said. "With wireless technology you can run in those lanes just as TheBus does."

Money saved building an at-grade train could be used to build extensions of the East Kapolei to Ala Moana train into areas such as Waikiki and the University of Hawai'i-Mānoa. A reduction in the cost of the rail project could help the city deal with shortfalls in tax collections needed to pay the city's \$4 billion share of the project.

lack of full study

However, the city says a more expensive, all-elevated train would be safer and have a greater maximum passenger capacity than a ground-level train. An at-grade train also would reduce the availability of road lanes, which would create greater traffic problems and increase commuting times,

according to the city.

Craig said the city has not conducted any recent studies to support those contentions. City transportation Director Wayne Yoshioka was unavailable to comment for this story.

The lack of a more recent city study of an at-grade train has raised questions about whether that option was adequately studied.

"I think it's been insufficient," said Nishi, of the architects institute. "They're going in one direction, that's obvious. It doesn't benefit the community."

The city's decision to eliminate at-grade rail options without studying the costs, benefits and environmental impacts could present problems should opponents try to stop the project via a lawsuit, Craig and others have said.

City Council members Charles Djou and the late Duke Bainum wrote the U.S. Department of Transportation in June stating that the city should have studied other transit alternatives as well as alternate routes.

The concern is that it's impossible to judge whether the current elevated rail and the route are the most environmentally favorable options unless alternatives are fully studied.

"There has to be a common level — basically an even playing field between the (different) modes up to the point where you determine which ones are more desirable in terms of the capital investment required versus the number of passengers carried and their effects on the environment," Craig said. "The proper procedure is you choose your recommended alternative after you have explored the options at the (draft environmental impact study) level."

City Council member Okino said the superior performance and environmental benefits of elevated rail are obvious and don't require further study.

"We could have presented a whole bunch of information that would have shown it very clearly, but that's hindsight," Okino said. "Even if that's challenged, we can show existing data and studies that show clearly that there's no comparison, even if it's not Honolulu."

"It's an easy thing to prove."

Star Bulletin

GET funds don't belong to county

The mayor saying the rail tax is off-limits to the Legislature is truly off base. Mufi Hannemann does not decide what is done with the state tax and cannot encumber anything dealing with the state, and hopefully never will.

I hope the legislators will send a strong message to the city that the rail is Honolulu's problem, not the whole state's. If Honolulu wants a rail, let it pay for it. The general excise tax is the state's money. It should be used for the purposes of the whole state.

M. Simpson
Leeward Oahu

Big Labor Aboard! Honolulu Mayor Signs Rail PLA | The Truth About PLAs

Last Tuesday (11/17) Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann signed a project labor agreement (PLA) for a \$5.5 billion rail transit project.



(Click [here](#) to read the Mayor's "State of Rail Transit" statement from 10/29 for background on this project, which has been in the planning stages for years.)

In an effort to avoid the stigma attached to discriminatory and costly PLAs, this agreement was re-branded and sold to the public as a [Rapid Transit Stabilization Agreement](#).

If you don't have time to read the PLA's Rapid Transit Stabilization Agreement's 141 pages worth of light reading linked above, *The Honolulu Advertiser* explains some provisions in this document that are [typical of most PLAs](#) ([Rail Gets No-Strike Promise](#), 11/18).

Non-union contractors working on state projects already must pay union-level wages. Under the agreement, roughly one-third of non-union worker wages will go into union trust funds. That money will then be used to provide non-union workers with union-type vacation, health care, pension and other benefits while they work on the project.

Of course, it is likely nonunion workers will never see those benefits unless they join a union and/or meet vesting schedules.

Ron Taketa, financial secretary of the 7,200-member Hawaii Carpenters Union, said yesterday's agreement does not force any contractors to pay higher wages, nor does it does not force them to unionize . What the agreement does is assure cost certainty by eliminating the risk of labor disruptions, Taketa said.

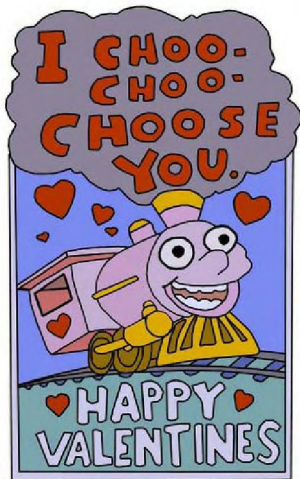
"The unions have agreed that there will be no work stoppages or slowdowns for the duration of the project so the city can expect that the project will proceed uninterrupted by any disruptions or slowdowns on the part of the union," he said.

Yep, another provision [typical in PLAs](#): Big Labor promises not to strike (unions employees strike, nonunion employees do not) in exchange for an agreement that gives union contractors an advantage over competitors, i.e., quality and local nonunion contractors and their employees. This Alice in Wonderland-style logic is exactly why PLAs are reviled as legalized extortion rather than sound public policy.

While Hawaii has one of the highest percentages of construction workforce union membership in the nation – [38.6 percent](#) – it is a shame that government officials are limiting nonunion employees to these choices:

1. Nonunion employees can join a union and hope the union dispatches them to the jobsite ahead of other union members on the “out of work” bench that likely have seniority and preference over them.
2. Nonunion employees can work on this project as long as they pay fees and dues to a union and forfeit their benefits unless they join a union and/or meet vesting schedules.
3. Nonunion employees can choose not to work on a project funded by their own tax dollars.

Of course, all of these “choices” are available to a nonunion employee ONLY if their nonunion employer decides to sign a PLA (this rarely happens) AND successfully submits the lowest and most responsive bid when competing against other contractors for construction contracts.



...to build Honolulu's Rail project via a PLA. Big Labor, don't forget to be my Valentine on Election Day!
Mayor Hannemann

Read more about the project from *The Honolulu Star Bulletin* ([City Signs \\$483M Rail Contract](#), 11/18) after the jump.




At a news conference yesterday, city officials and executives from contractor Kiewit Pacific Co. signed a \$483 million contract to build the first 6.5 miles of the 20-mile rail transit system, which would eventually stretch from East Kapolei to Ala Moana Center.

The project is funded by an increase in the state general excise tax by half a percentage point on Oahu and federal funds. An environmental impact statement for the project – which still has not received state and federal approval – could prevent this project from being built, but that isn't stopping progress on this project.

The Hannemann administration plans to issue a request for proposals today for the second phase — a 3.9-mile project from Pearl Highlands Shopping Center to Aloha Stadium, with construction scheduled to start in 2011.

Let's hope that Mayor Hannemann reconsiders the PLA on the Honolulu Transit Rail Project. It is not too late to remove the provisions in a PLA that discriminate against nonunion employers and employees. Everyone benefits when projects are procured using a level playing field where all contractors can compete to give taxpayers the best project at the best price.



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November 24, 2009

Lingle promises thorough review of Honolulu rail project

By DERRICK DePLEDGE
Advertiser Government Writer

Gov. Linda Lingle said yesterday that she would not "rubber stamp" the final environmental impact statement on Honolulu's \$5.5 billion rail project, promising a thorough review of whether the city adequately explored alternatives and whether the financial plan remains sound given the recession.

Both the state and the federal government have to accept the final environmental report, a key benchmark before the city can begin construction on the project.

Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann, who wants to break ground early next year, has said the Lingle administration has already looked at the draft report and that the governor merely "closes the loop" by formally accepting the finished document.

Lingle, on her weekly appearance on the Mike Buck radio show on KHVH, said she would take her time.

"I'm going to spend my life in Hawai'i," Lingle said. "I'm not going to have people look back and say 'Why couldn't you see that this couldn't work? Why didn't you force them to review the alternatives?'

"So I will not rubber-stamp the document. It will not be a quick, couple days turnaround."

Lingle said she would examine whether the city adequately considered a street-level design as an alternative to an elevated train between East Kapolei and Ala Moana. The American Institute of Architects Honolulu chapter and Kamehameha Schools have suggested a street-level design for cost savings and aesthetic reasons.

The governor said the city has to take cost into consideration as tax revenues, which will help finance the rail project, decline because of the recession.

Hannemann said the financial plan for the project has already been extensively analyzed. The mayor said the state's environmental review law does not call for a financial analysis of projects and questioned whether the governor has a political motive for raising the issue.

Hannemann, a Democrat, said he hoped the Republican governor's comments reflect "her ignorance of the EIS process and not an indication of how she intends to politicize the process."

Hannemann and his aides believe Lingle has been tepid on rail. In 2005, the governor allowed a general-excise tax increase to finance the rail project to become law without her signature. Last year, the governor signed a petition to put the rail project before O'ahu voters, saying people should be given the opportunity to make an informed decision.

A lengthy review by Lingle of the final environmental impact statement could delay Hannemann's ambitious construction schedule.

Hannemann said it is ironic Lingle would aggressively scrutinize the environmental report on rail after exempting Hawai'i Superferry from environmental review, a decision that ultimately led to the project's collapse.

"I find it very ironic that, with Superferry, she ran roughshod over that, didn't think there was a need to

do that, and then now with rail, she's going to hold our feet to the fire and ask questions that really speak to her ignorance of the EIS process," the mayor said.



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 04:00AM First Light
 05:00AM America In The Morning with Jim Bohannon
 06:00AM KPUA Morning News with anchor Ken Hupp
 09:00AM Community Forum
 10:00AM Rush Limbaugh
 01:00PM Dr. Dean Edell
 02:00PM Dateline: Washington
 03:00PM Sporting News
 04:00PM Sports Byline with Ron Barr
 07:00PM Coast to Coast

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Hilo, Hawaii News, Sports, & Information

Tuesday, November 24, 2009

HAWAII NEWS

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Posted: Tuesday, November 24th, 2009 4:37 AM HST

Hawaii Gov. Lingle won't give quick OK to rail

By Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — Gov. Linda Lingle says she won't sign off on Honolulu's planned rail project until she's convinced that alternatives to an elevated line were fully explored and that the city can afford it.

Lingle pledged Monday to carefully review a pending environmental impact statement before approving it.

Prolonged consideration could delay the planned January start of rail construction because the environmental study must be completed first.

Lingle says she wants to consider whether building parts of the rail line at street-level would be better.

She also worries that tax collections may be inadequate to pay for the \$5.5 billion rail project.

Lingle spoke about the rail line during a talk show on KHVH-AM with host Mike Buck.



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Honolulu Weekly

Rail Shibai

November 25, 2009

This letter is in response to the *Weekly*'s transportation story, "On the fast track," (10/28). For the naysayers, it is all very well to claim that the Honolulu Rail system as planned is a bit of a fraud.

It is very easy to reiterate the various rail, bus rapid-transit, magnet-rail, highway, and tollway options that could have been the finalized product.

However, there are times when rehashing a particular option really is another delaying tactic. When an alternative is presented at this stage in the process, it becomes extremely suspect.

Upon first examination, the Kamehameha Schools street trolley plan looks nice and invigorating a blast of fresh air into a seemingly stifling concrete jungle. When fully read, the plan is not so clear and becomes a bit of a dull read with the regurgitation of unworkable ideas.

Operating a street trolley system as envisioned by the Kamehameha plan is untenable in present-day Honolulu. The effect upon car and bus traffic would increase congestion not to mention the problem of potential trolley car collisions.

The only possible way to mitigate this effect would be to carve out exclusive trolley corridors separated from car and bus traffic as is done with certain sections of Boston's Green Line or San Francisco's Muni system. One must keep in mind that both of those systems run underground to a great extent when within their respective urban cores. Such a method would not mitigate the traffic problems on Kapiolani, rather such a reduction in lanes would exacerbate the issue.

The elevated system as proposed by Mayor Mufi Hannemann is a modern system based upon ideas that have worked well in the past. There are elevated systems in Singapore, Paris, Chicago, and London. One is able to walk around Paris or London whilst shopping for groceries, dropping the kids off for childcare or even when seeing one's dentist. There is no strip mall parking lot to navigate through. One is able to pop into the L in Chicago and get off at O'Hare airport. Sure, there are automobile traffic issues, but these are not mixed into the rail system. When there is a car accident on I-94, you are still able to get across town.

To accomplish the persistent goals of providing an alternative transportation system, getting people out of their cars, and reducing the amount of potential future traffic congestion, an elevated system is the most cost-effective method.

We need to stick with the plan that the mayor has proposed. It has been in the planning stages for over 40 years. It is not something that has been simply trashed together without regard to the consequences.

Edward Smith
Honolulu

MidWeek

Mufi's Deal With Unions Is Smart

November 25, 2009

By Larry Price

Negotiations break down and stall for many reasons. In Hawaii, a relatively small state, we have seen negotiations become especially difficult, often to the point of impasse, stalemate or even breakdown. Parties become angry over minor issues and become entrenched in their positions. Perceptions become distorted, and judgments made by our leadership appeared to be biased.

The worst outcome in these situations is when people stop communicating effectively. It's hard to believe, but Hawaiian Airlines pilots have been deadlocked for almost three years and are currently under the watchful eye of a federal mediator.

It is not uncommon for negotiations, especially distributive ones, to become contentious to the point of breakdown. In extreme cases, relations can become strained to the breaking point or get just plain nasty. This is true in just about all difficult negotiations.

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These types of negotiations lead to what they call an impasse. The pilots wanted the mediator to declare an impasse in their negotiations and, if you recall, he ordered them to keep talking with the mediators until their Dec. 7 meeting was concluded. Impasse is not the end of the world for negotiations; they are not permanent and don't have to be destructive. In many cases, an impasse can be tactical, where it is used as a way to gain leverage or put pressure on the other party to make concessions. It doesn't always work, but it's worth a try in most situations.

So it is interesting to note that Mayor Mufi Hannemann signed an agreement with 12 local labor unions, who have agreed not to strike or delay the construction of the Oahu rail project. The agreement is intended to prevent labor disruptions for the duration of the project and protect union jobs.

Among those who signed the agreement were unions representing carpenters, heavy equipment operators, iron workers and roofers. This is a classic negotiation strategy of a professional. The mayor has made a very smart move - it could have developed into more than one impasse with more than one private union. Mind you, this is not a public union negotiating with a state or county government. These are 12 very powerful private unions negotiating with a county government, using monies from public taxpayers. A private union contracted to construct a private building with private funds is an entirely different set of circumstances.

That's what makes Hannemann's deal so significant. It preempts any kind of labor dispute that would disrupt the construction of his pet project, the Oahu Rail Transit System, on which he expects to begin construction next year. The project is slated for completion in 2019. The city will have to release a final environmental impact statement on the project by the end of year before any construction can begin next year. That is the wisdom of the agreement, because he has the construction unions on board to guarantee the work will get done as planned, and that's important to federal transportation officials.

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This also gives the project the guaranteed continuity it needs to assure the public the rail project is not going to be marred by labor strife. Similar projects throughout the country have had some bad experiences with labor. There is one concern not mentioned, although it deserves attention: There is the possibility that Hannemann may not be sitting in the county driver's seat when the rail system is under construction. No one can predict who will be mayor or governor in the midstream of construction. Remember the construction of H-2, and especially H-3.

As we have seen more often than not, changing the leadership during large public works projects can alter the eventual outcome of those projects.

Find this article at: http://www.midweek.com/content/columns/therightprice_article/mufis_deal_with_unions_is_smart/

Letters to the editor

For Friday, November 26, 2009

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Nov 26, 2009

Oahu rail project helps entire state

M. Simpson's Nov. 23 letter ("GET funds don't belong to county") suggesting that the city is somehow inappropriately keeping rail transit project revenue off-limits to the state demonstrated a total misunderstanding of how the project is financed.

In 2005, the governor and state Legislature authorized all the counties, at their discretion and upon adoption of a county ordinance, to levy a surcharge on the state general excise tax. The state law they approved specifically limits Honolulu's use of the GET surcharge to "operating or capital costs of a locally preferred alternative for a mass transit project. ..."

Similarly, the ordinance adopted by the city specifies that the only monies to be used for financing the rail project are GET surcharge receipts and federal transit funds. Consequently, all bonds we issue for the project will be retired solely from those dedicated sources.

With the city's recent award of the construction contract for the project's first phase, we have now encumbered funding for the project. Diverting city-authorized GET surcharge monies would be a violation of state law, and of the public trust.

Finally, Simpson fails to understand that the entire state stands to benefit from Honolulu's rail project. Its construction and related development will create jobs and help the economy, while providing a much-needed transportation alternative.

Mark Oto,
Deputy director, Honolulu Department of Budget and Fiscal Services



November 27, 2009

Rail system still faces many hurdles

EIS, other issues critical to project shouldn't be rushed

By Ben Cayetano

"I don't hide my ambition," Mayor Mufi Hannemann once said. That became evident when he awarded a \$486 million construction contract to Kiewit Pacific Co. The contract "formally encumbers rail transit funds" Hannemann declared and "(t)herefore it cannot be shifted or used by anyone for any other purposes."

Not quite — the contract is not encumbered until construction begins and that should not happen until the Environmental Impact Statement is approved by Gov. Linda Lingle and authorized signatories such as the federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Thereafter, the Federal Transit Administration must give final approval of the EIS and issue a Record of Decision before construction can begin. At any time, the state Legislature could either pass a law to divert the one-half percentage point general excise tax to the state general fund or to terminate the tax permanently.

Federal environmental law requires "consultation" with all affected parties and dictates that it should take place before the rail route is planned. Not only has Hannemann avoided doing that but he ignored the concerns expressed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. National Park Service, the U.S. District Court judges (Hawaii), Kamehameha Schools, and the Hawaii chapter of the American Institute of Architects, among many others.

When the city issued the draft EIS last October, the state O'ahu Burial Council complained of a "gross lack of consultation." The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation — a federal agency which is a signatory to the EIS — wrote the FTA that it did not understand how the EIS had got to its final draft "without ongoing consultation with all consulting parties."

Senate President Colleen Hanabusa, recalling the fate of the Superferry, warned, "It's not wise to belittle a process that's very much a part of our law." And the National Trust for Historic Preservation warned the city that its failure to perform an Archeological Inventory Survey Plan prior to selecting the route alignment "renders the project legally vulnerable."

Hannemann's reaction? Hire lawyers to defend the city in anticipated lawsuits. Cost: \$300,000. The appropriation was necessary, Council Chairman Todd Apo explained, to save the public money in "the long run." How, he did not say.

Hannemann has spent more than \$5 million for a one-sided public relations campaign touting his rail project. The information being fed to the public is coming almost exclusively from the city's consultant, Parsons Brinckerhoff, which has a huge financial stake in the project.

Since 2005, the city awarded Parsons two contracts worth \$96.2 million. If the project is built, the city estimates at least \$549 million in so-called "soft costs" (planning, design, engineering) — most of which will be paid as fees to Parsons.

Infraconsult, a consultant company formed by three former Parsons employees, received an \$11.2 million contract to provide "oversight" of Parsons' work. Another former Parsons employee, Wayne Yoshioka, was appointed by Hannemann to head the City Department of Transportation Services. The obvious conflicts of interest of this cozy arrangement did not faze the mayor.

No need to worry, City Managing Director Kirk Caldwell opined in a recent op-ed, saying that FTA consultants reviewed and approved Parsons' work. But all rail projects go through the same review process. And as the debacle of Tren Urbano reveals, the process is not without its flaws.

Tren Urbano was once hailed by Parsons as one of its top projects. San Juan's politicians were told that it would cost \$1.086 billion to build and carry an average weekday ridership of 110,000 by 2010.

Opened in 2005, the final cost: \$2.228 billion (a 105 percent cost overrun); average weekday ridership (2009): 31,900 (29 percent of original forecast). Tren Urbano is a financial disaster for San Juan's taxpayers, an embarrassment for Parsons and — as the FTA admitted in testimony before Congress — an example of a project gone badly.

The mea culpas provide little comfort for San Juan's 2,217,000 residents who are footing the bill. The irony is that the cost overruns result in higher fees for Parsons, which still gets paid.

The city's \$5.5 billion rail system will be the most costly public works project in Hawai'i's history. Surely, O'ahu's 905,600 residents deserve assurance that their tax dollars are being spent wisely and prudently. Instead Mayor Hannemann is rushing the rail project through, apparently hoping to begin construction before he leaves the city to run for governor in 2010 — abandoning the rail project and leaving the city's looming financial crisis to his unlucky successor.



November 27, 2009

Third And Final Pearl Ridge Rail Station Workshop Set For December 2

*By Honolulu Rail Transit Project
Reader Submitted*

The City and County of Honolulu as part of the Honolulu Rail Transit project will unveil final drawings for the Pearl Ridge rail station on Wednesday, December 2.

The community workshop is scheduled from 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Pearl Ridge Elementary School, 98-940 Moanalua Road. This will be the last of three workshops for the planned Pearl Ridge station located near the intersection of Kamehameha Highway and Kaonohi Street.

Rail project officials will unveil renderings of the Pearl Ridge station based on residents' input from the previous workshops in September and October.

Areas of the train station to be discussed are the "touch down" sections where the elevated portions of the stations meet the street. Categories include color, landscaping, entryway design, exterior and interior wall finishes, seating areas, and plaques and monuments for the station.

Similar community-based workshops have been held for rail transit stations planned for Waipahu, Kapolei and West Oahu Leeward Community College.

For more information on the community workshops, contact the project office at 566-2299 or at info@honolulutransit.org.

Letters to the editor

For Friday, November 27, 2009

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Nov 27, 2009

Mayor putting people to work

I want to thank Mayor Mufi Hannemann for his efforts to put our people to work. He did not waste his time blaming or finding ways to make the work force and our children suffer as a solution to the budget problem. Instead he went right to work and is pushing forward the rail and other construction projects that will put thousands to work.

If only our governor and her administration had the same integrity, competence, or ability to communicate with the public honestly we might not be in this debacle. She has said that we have to cut the fat in our work force and restructure the way we do business. Well, I can't think of a bigger waste than that of our governor and her administration, so maybe we should start to cut the fat with them.

James Lutte
Waianae

November 28, 2009

Letters to the Editor

Rail transit

Project out of touch with technology

After we've been told that the city transit project was based on careful analysis of rail alternatives, I really appreciated Sean Hao's article (Nov. 23), which explained just how out of date (11 years ago) that analysis is. Just last week (Nov. 18) the project director even admitted in an article in the Weekly that the city's rail system is essentially the same heavy rail proposed in the 1980s and 1990s.

The city's transit team and a majority of the City Council are out of touch with current developments in rail transit. In the past 15 years, light rail technology has undergone dramatic improvement, with many American cities (Seattle, Portland, Los Angeles, Sacramento, Phoenix, Denver, to name a few) now installing light rail for their transportation needs.

The city's technology dictates that the system can only run elevated, which means when the money runs out, or the burial/historic impact/view corridor issues prove impossible to solve, the system stops. There is no way to continue the system, such as to Waikīkī or UH-Mānoa, unless we are willing to pay \$270 million/mile and put up with an overhead freeway running through our neighborhoods.

SCOTT R. WILSON | Honolulu

November 29, 2009

Letters to the Editor

Cayetano should offer real solutions

It was just a year ago this month that the people of Honolulu voted to approve rail for O'ahu. The city is wrapping up its work on the final environmental impact statement. The financial plan for the project has been scrutinized and found to be reasonable and acceptable by business experts.

No other economic stimulus program in the state can put so many people back to work and deliver so many benefits to Hawai'i's economy.

Surely Ben Cayetano (Island Voices, Nov. 27) remembers how families and businesses suffered in the recession of the 1990s, when he led the state.

The former governor needs to see the big picture of the economic, environmental and social benefits of rail and not focus on trying to oppose everything Mayor Hannemann supports. Even Cayetano's favorite candidate for governor, Congressman Neil Abercrombie, is a longtime supporter of rail.

The next time we hear from the former governor, the hope is he'll do more than just whine and complain again, and instead offer a meaningful transportation alternative or some workable solutions to the problems Hawai'i now faces, including the challenges of an economy on the decline and an ever-worsening traffic situation on O'ahu.

Kirk Caldwell | Managing director, City and County of Honolulu

November 29, 2009

Letters to the Editor

Lingle should not delay EIS approval

When Gov. Lingle reviews the final environmental impact statement for Honolulu's rail system, she should remember that it's remarkably similar to the same elevated rail project she proposed.

In 2003, I was part of a task force formed and led by Gov. Lingle to look at long-term transportation solutions for O'ahu. The task force of city and state officials reviewed alternatives and recommended building a multi-billion-dollar elevated rail transit system to deal with traffic congestion.

On Oct. 27, 2003, I stood beside her when she unveiled the rail initiative. It stretched from Kapolei to Iwilei along an elevated line that would follow Farrington, Kamehameha and Nimitz highways — closely matching the concept and route for the current rail plan.

Gov. Lingle made it clear that the city would oversee construction of rail with the state and federal government assisting in securing funding. That is what this city administration and council have done throughout this EIS process.

We thank Gov. Lingle for helping to bring the rail idea back to the table. Now we respectfully ask her to complete the task by approving the rail transit FEIS so we can begin work, deal with our traffic and create jobs to jump-start the economy.

GARY OKINO | Councilman, Honolulu City Council



November 29, 2009

Reviews by state may delay Honolulu's rail transit plans

*By Sean Hao
Advertiser Staff Writer*

Despite opportunities to raise the issues earlier, state officials did not question until last week what alternatives city officials studied before deciding to build an elevated heavy-rail commuter line.

The state also did not question whether the city's financial plan for the \$5.5 billion project was feasible, according to comments on the project's environmental impact statement submitted by state agencies before a Feb. 6, 2009, deadline.

Now the state plans to probe both questions — a review that could delay an ambitious city plan to begin construction on the 20-mile, East Kapolei to Ala Moana train in January or February.

Gov. Linda Lingle last week said she will conduct a thorough review of both issues before deciding whether the project's final environmental impact statement is acceptable to the state. The announcement surprised city officials, who felt such issues already were settled.

A substantial review would amount to an unnecessary re-review of an analysis already conducted by various state agencies, said city spokes-man Bill Brennan.

"That's what the (environmental impact statement) process is — us working with them to address concerns that have been identified," Brennan said. "The concerns that she mentions don't seem to be the ones that her agencies are raising."

State officials have known since late 2006 that the city would not analyze the costs and environmental impacts of a light-rail, street-level train. However, they failed, until now, to question whether the city adequately explored alternatives to the elevated commuter rail. The project's environmental review process, which the state participates in, started more than a year ago.

Lingle's statement last week comes days or weeks before she's expected to receive the final environmental impact statement for the project. Her signature is required for the EIS to be released and the project to move forward. City officials hope to break ground about five weeks after the final environmental impact study is released.

tax take drops

Lingle, speaking Monday on the Mike Buck radio show on KHVH, said the need for a thorough review is partially prompted by lower tax collections resulting from the economic downturn. Tax collections needed to build Honolulu's planned elevated rail transit line have been declining.

The transit tax raised a net \$8.9 million for the city in October, which was down 30 percent from a year earlier. Through the first four months of the fiscal year, transit tax collections are down nearly 6 percent from the year-ago period to \$52 million, based on figures provided by the state Department of Taxation.

The drop in tax collections provides a reason for city officials to look at potentially cheaper at-grade rail options, Lingle said.

"There has to be a weighing of factors here," she said. "If an above-grade system, heavy rail, costs \$5.5 billion, and tax revenues have plunged 30 percent in this past October they're going to have to look at alternatives, just the way every other entity has to look at alternatives since the financial crisis.

"You can't continue on a path when the revenues simply wouldn't be there anymore."

If the city's transit tax collections don't meet expectations and the costs remain the same, the added burden could fall on taxpayers via an increase in state or county taxes. However, at this point, the city does not anticipate having to deal with a shortfall. That's because it expects lower transit tax collections to be offset by lower construction costs and a future economic rebound.

It's unclear whether Lingle's concerns also are partially driven by the March shutdown of the Hawaii Superferry service. That project initially sidestepped the required environmental impact study only to be halted by the courts.

Study completed

The city has done an environmental impact study for the train. However, several groups — including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Kamehameha Schools and the American Institute of Architects — have expressed concerns that it was inadequate.

Part of the concern is whether the city adequately explored options such as an at-grade train system, or managed, elevated highway lanes. The last time the city studied the viability of a ground-level train through Honolulu's urban core was in 1998. Lingle and others have said the 1998 study is outdated.

Lingle also said she wants assurances concerning how much money the federal government will provide the city to help pay for the train. The city is counting on \$1.55 billion in federal funds. However, the federal government isn't expected to announce how much money it will give the city until spring 2011.

City spokesman Brennan questioned whether it's appropriate for the state to review a city financial plan that's already been vetted by the federal government.

The governor's role now is "not a review (of) our finances or whether alternatives (were explored)," he said. "It's (to determine) are we complying with state environmental law?"

"We're trying to do it by the book," Brennan added. "We shouldn't be faulted for anything, I don't think, at this point, (because) we are doing an" environmental impact study, he said.

City officials did not respond to questions about what would happen if Lingle does not sign the environmental impact statement. However, the city already has approved spending \$300,000 to fight off potential legal challenges to the project.

Agencies responded

More than a half dozen state agencies submitted comments and concerns about the city's environmental impact study last spring. But the comments submitted did not expressly question whether the city's financial plan was feasible, or why a street-level train was not more rigorously explored.

Neither Linda Smith, Lingle's senior policy adviser, nor Russell Pang, spokes-man for the governor, responded to requests for comment.

State transportation Director Brennon Morioka said comments submitted by state agencies were

limited to addressing how the train would affect each agency. The governor's job is to look at the broader implications of the project, he said.

As a result, DOT's concerns focused mainly on mitigating impacts on Hono-lulu International Airport property and state highways.

"Our comments from the agencies are more of a technical nature and (concern) the impacts to our facilities," Morioka said. "She wants to make sure she knows fully what she's signing off on, and what the comfort level is that they met all the requirements for the environmental review. She just wants to do her own due diligence.

"We all know there's a very good possibility of the rail project being taken to court, so I think the more credibility the document has, the better chance it has in standing up in a court of law."

Honolulu Rail Transit Project



20-Mile Route

Kapolei to Ala Moana Center



Decisions Made

- December 22, 2006
- City Council selected fixed guideway in exclusive Right-of-Way
- Known as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA)
- Established route, elevated guideway in downtown

Decisions Made

- **Transit Mode**

- Fixed guideway in exclusive Right-of-Way

- **Alignment**

- Now – East Kapolei to Ala Moana Center
- Future – Kapolei to UH Mānoa and Waikīkī

- **Vehicle Technology**

- Steel wheel on steel rail – “Light Metro”
- Widely used, durable, cost-effective

Operating Details

- **Hours**
 - From 4 a.m. to midnight, every 3 to 10 minutes
- **Speed**
 - 55+ mph top speed; 30 mph average with stops
- **Ticket cost**
 - Same as TheBus, can use a transfer from one to the other
- **Catching a train**
 - Integrated with TheBus, bike and walking paths, and park-and-ride at some stations

Travel Times to Ala Moana Center Station

From:	Time:
East Kapolei Station	42 minutes
Waipahu Transit Center	31 minutes
Pearlridge Center Station	24 minutes
Airport Station	16 minutes
Kalihi Station	10 minutes
Downtown Station	4 minutes

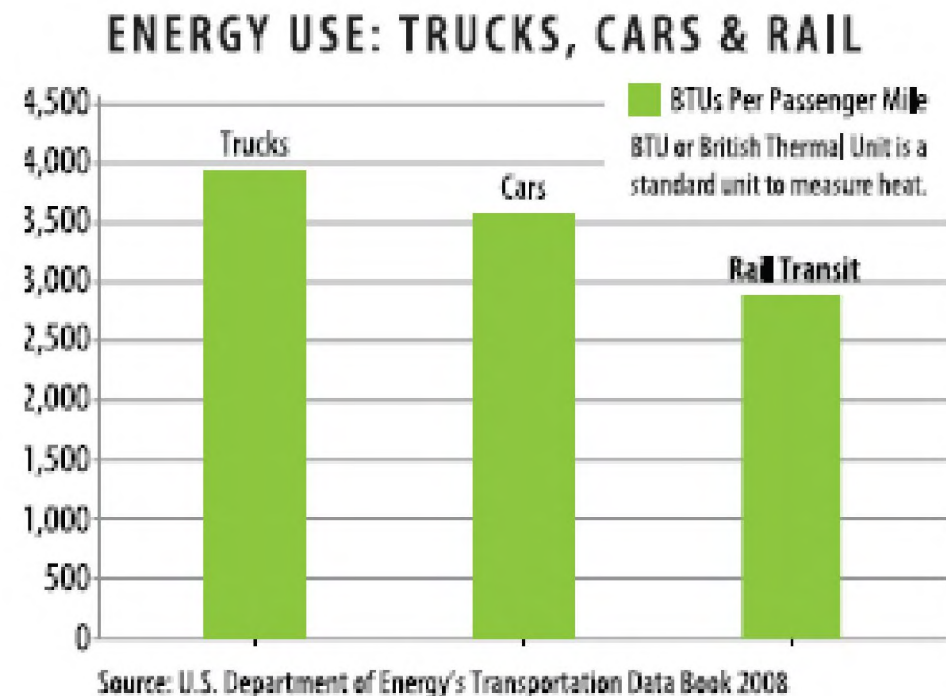
Traffic Benefits

- Reduce future traffic delay by about 20%
- Remove more than 30,000 cars and trucks from our roads each day



Environmental Benefits

- Rail uses less energy than single occupant cars and trucks, per passenger mile
- “Is Rail Green? YES, compared to today’s driving patterns” – Hawaii Business magazine, June 2009



Key Sustainable Features

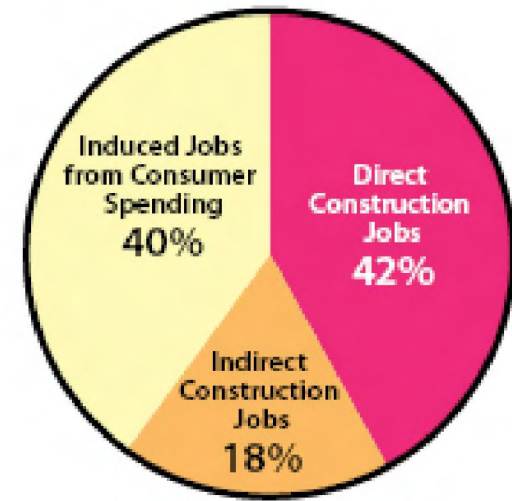
- Sustainable construction methods
 - Reuse and recycle construction materials when possible
- Maintenance & Storage Facility – LEED Silver Certified
- Open-air rail stations connect with bike and walk paths



Economic Benefits

- Building rail will fight the recession
- Creating 10,000 jobs a year
- State's largest job creating project

Employment Created by Rail Construction*



*Person years of employment.

How Much Will It Cost to Build?

	Millions of 2008 Dollars	Millions of Inflated Dollars
Estimated Construction Cost	2,100	2,490
Design/Construction Contingency	555	660
Construction Subtotal	2,655	3,150
Right-of-Way	150	175
Vehicles	295	355
Professional Services	795	970
Project Reserve	230	280
Capital Cost	4,125	4,930
Finance Charges	380	505
TOTAL COST	4,500	5,435

Sources and Uses of Funds

	Millions of Inflated Dollars
GET Surcharge Revenues	4,050
FTA New Starts Funds	1,385
TOTAL REVENUE	5,435
Capital Cost	4,930
Finance Charges	505
TOTAL COST	5,435

General Excise and Use Tax

- GET surcharge spread over 16 years
- Takes the middle ground of economic “boom & bust” cycle
- GET revenues follow the economy; when economy rises, so will GET revenues

Operating & Maintenance Cost

- 2-3% of the City's annual operating budget
- an amount that can be accommodated without an increase in taxes

A bus+rail system costs less than the cost of carrying the same number of riders on a bus-only system

What Could It Look Like?



Elevated Rail Across The World



Bangkok, Thailand



Vancouver Sky Train



Docklands Light Rail, London

Kamehameha Highway at Ka'ahumanu Street



Kamehameha Highway near Radford Drive



Crossing Nuʻuanu Stream



Halekauwila Street at Mother Waldron Park



EXISTING



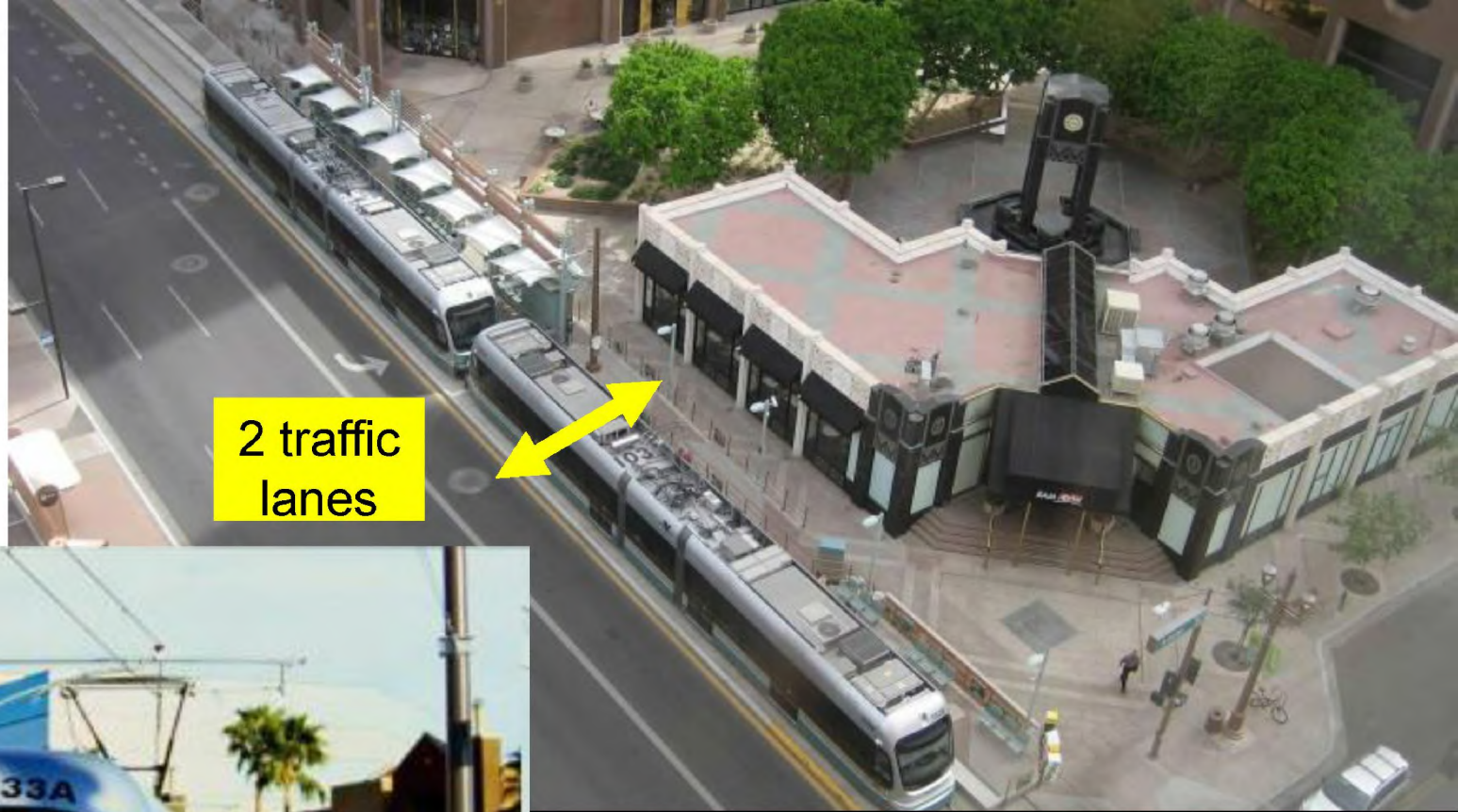
SIMULATION

Ground-Level Rail Compared to Elevated Rail

- **Slow – would add 60% to travel times**
 - Trains slowed by traffic congestion, red lights, accidents, etc.
- **At-grade traffic impacts**
 - Safety and car-train and ped–train collisions
 - Reduced service to cross-traffic
- **Far fewer passengers**
- **36% higher operating cost per passenger mile**
- **Many more property acquisitions and relocations**



Walkers and bikers must cross in front of an at-grade train



2 traffic
lanes

At-grade train in Phoenix, a spacious
and sprawling city



Ground-level train needs a 12-foot
wide traffic lane

Simulation of Street Level Rail at Honolulu Community College



Elevated Rail

- **Fast, frequent trains – 42 minute Kapolei-to-Ala Moana Center trip**
 - **Top speed more than 55 mph**
 - **Trains every 3 minutes in AM and PM rush hours**
- **Land use – fewer than 40 full acquisitions for 20 miles of elevated rail**
- **Capacity – over 100,000 rides per day**
 - **Peak of more than 12,000 riders per hour in each direction**

West Loch Station



West Loch Station



Waipahu Transit Center Station



Waipahu Transit Center Station



Canopy Design for Stations

Aerial view



Canopy Design for Stations

Ground level view



Canopy Design for Stations

Platform view



Project Schedule

- Late Summer 2009: Release of Final EIS
- Fall 2009: FTA issues Record of Decision
- December 2009: Groundbreaking
- Late 2012: Service opens in phases, beginning in Waipahu
- Spring 2019: Start full service

Stay Informed

- Sign up for monthly newsletter
- Watch “Honolulu on the Move,” ‘Olelo Channel 54, Mondays at 6:30 pm
- Visit www.honolulutransit.org
- Visit youtube.com/honoluluonthemove
- Facebook

Mahalo!

